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ABSTRACT

This is the third National Assessment report on the writing of children aged 9, 13, and 17, and young adults. The three exercises used in the writing assessment were: Age 9: The Forest Fire Exercise; Age 13: The Famous Person Exercise; and Age 17: The Famous Person Exercise. An exercise for young adults (Adults: The Commissioner Stroud Letter) required them to write formal letters to public officials expressing a viewpoint on an issue. The report contains separate chapters for each age group: Chapter 2 describes the essays written by 9-year-olds; Chapter 3 reports on 13-year-olds; and Chapters 4 and 5 describe 17-year-olds and young adults, respectively. Each chapter begins with an introductory statement about particularly important aspects of the essays that age group wrote. Chapter 6 discusses The Differences between 9's, 13's, 17's and Adults. The results of the four analyses (overall quality, error counts, characterization, and computer) are presented under six headings: essay length, paragraphing, punctuation and capitalization, sentence structure, agreement, and words (spelling, vocabulary and usage). Six appendixes present: Procedures for Assigning Overall Quality Scores; Kinds of Errors Sought in the Error Count Analysis; Characterizations; Computer Scoring of Essays; Sample Percentages; and Best Essays. Tables and figures illustrate the text.
(Author/LS)

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ED 062325

REPORT 8
WRITING MECHANICS

TE 002 875

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

A Project of the Education Commission of the States

Robert W. Scott, Governor of North Carolina, Chairman, Education Commission of the States
Wendell H. Pierce, Executive Director, Education Commission of the States
James A. Hazlett, Administrative Director, National Assessment

Assessment Reports

#1	Science: National Results	July, 1970
#2a	Citizenship: National Results -- Partial	July, 1970
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#8	Writing: National Results -- Writing Mechanics	February, 1972

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Education Commission of the States
300 Lincoln Tower
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80203

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

A Project of the Education Commission of the States

REPORT 8

WRITING: NATIONAL RESULTS -- WRITING MECHANICS

February, 1972

National Assessment of Educational Progress

James A. Hazlett
Administrative Director

J. Stanley Ahmann
Staff Director

George H. Johnson
Associate Staff Director

This report was designed and written by: Henry Slotnick, Assistant to the Director,
Research and Analysis Department,
National Assessment of Educational Progress

National Assessment staff support and final preparation of manuscript was provided by:

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- Data Processing Services Department, ECS
- Public Information Department, ECS

Preface

This is the third National Assessment report on the writing of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults. The first--Report 3--described the writing results nationally, and the second--Report 5-- presented the same results according to regions of the country, sex of the respondents, and the types of community the respondents lived in. Both reports described the results for all the writing exercises released to date.

This report, however, concentrates upon the results of only three of the exercises used in the writing assessment, exercises requiring the respondents to write essays or letters. However, while this report is much narrower in the number of exercises it covers, the coverage of the results is more detailed.

This report was aimed at a particular audience: English teachers and English educators. These readers would probably find the statistics describing the results to be both uninteresting and difficult to understand; they would likely find statements containing the intent of the statistics to be more readable and understandable. Consequently, the use of statistics in the text of the report has been minimized. As often as it was possible, statistics were translated into non-mathematical terms for inclusion in the text.

Other people will also read this report, persons interested in seeing the numbers the textual materials describe. For the benefit of those readers, the statistics are included at the end of each chapter and in Appendix E.

Acknowledgments

The persons responsible for holistically scoring the essays used in this report have been acknowledged in NAEP Report 3. The error counts analysis was conducted under the supervision of John O'Neill and Louise Diana, at the Measurement Research Center, Iowa City. Those involved in the characterizations described in this report are listed here. Their ingenuity and assistance were invaluable.

Dorie Anisman
Linguist
American Express Language Centers

Don Brown
Teacher
Champaign, Illinois

J. N. Hook
Professor Emeritus
University of Illinois

John V. Knapp
Assistant Professor
Northern Illinois University

Fredelle Maynard
Freelance Writer
Durham, New Hampshire

Walter Moore
Professor
University of Illinois

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This is a report about the kinds of things children and young adults do when they write. The title of the report, Writing Mechanics, may lead you to think that the report is about grammatical errors. In part it is, but it is not limited to errors. Since writing is much more than writing mistakes, this report will do more than report error counts; it will also tell you about the things that children and young adults do correctly, and about the things they don't do at all.

Summary of Writing Mechanics Conclusions

When you read the remaining chapters in this report, you will see how National Assessment reached the following conclusions about the writings of children and young adults.

9-year-old results

As a group, the papers revealed that 9-year-olds have limited competence in sentence construction and restricted vocabularies. Higher quality[1] essays demonstrated a rudimentary skill in writing, but the skill was inconsistently applied throughout a paper--when faced with the same writing problem several times in an essay (say the need for a comma), the 9-year-old tended to meet it correctly sometimes and incorrectly other times. Middle quality[1] papers used the same constructions and vocabularies as the high quality essays, and they showed the same kinds of errors. They were shorter, though, and the errors appeared more regularly in them. Lower quality[1] papers were of two varieties. One kind was almost uninterpretable; spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure were confused. The second kind was extremely short--usually one or two simple declarative sentences, either separated or run together.

13-year-old results

The children who wrote the highest quality essays had mastered the conventions of the written language they used; they knew what they were doing. Yet their papers were limited in the kinds of things they did and said--their writing was very conservative; they stayed with simple constructions and undeveloped ideas. The middle quality essays were written by children

---

[1] See page 7 for an explanation of the terms Higher, Middle, and Lower.

who were aware of the differences between written and spoken language, but their mastery of the conventions of written language was incomplete; they would do certain things reasonably well, but would fail at others. The lowest quality essays written by 13-year-olds indicated that the writers had no knowledge or understanding of the conventions of written language. By and large, these children wrote by attempting to record their spoken language.

17-year-old results

Both the middle and higher quality papers reflected a sound grasp of the basics of written language. Though there were spelling problems, there were not nearly as many mechanical errors in these as in the low quality essays. The major weakness in higher and middle quality papers was that they rarely contained anything but basic constructions and simple language expressing commonplace ideas. The lower quality papers were written by teenagers who have no real grasp of the conventions of written language.

Adult results

Almost a third of the adults asked to write declined to do so, and many of the people who agreed to participate did so with a reluctance reflected in their performances. The essays written by those people tended to be short, perfunctory and of low quality. High quality papers seemed to reflect the influence of newspaper journalism. That influence was suggested by the paragraphing (short paragraphs, often beginning with leads), the reliance upon simple sentence structures and minimal punctuation, and the generally precise use of words.

Why Look at Writing Mechanics?

National Assessment feels that the consumers of its results generally fall into three categories: lay people concerned about education, practicing school people, and scholars. With regard to the area of student writing, in particular, the practicing school people are English teachers, and the scholars include persons whose professional activities center around English education. Though they understand, of course, that good writing is not limited to mechanics, and that it is the result of more than a concern for grammar, punctuation, and spelling, all three groups are very interested in writing mechanics.

Early in National Assessment's history, a conference of lay people was assembled to talk about the writing assessment. The participants made many suggestions, including a strong recommendation that National Assessment be concerned about writing mechanics. The lay people felt that aside from the fact that mechanical issues are relatively easy to examine, they would indicate important things about the children and young adults who would write

essays for the assessment. Errors, for instance, might indicate the grasp young Americans have of the written language. Other mechanical considerations (constructions, for example) could tell us about the authors of the essays: constructions in an overdone thank you note or a poorly written letter of application for a job would certainly be as informative as the ideas expressed in the writing.

Teachers have always been interested in mechanics. For example, a study performed at the Educational Testing Service revealed that, according to their comments on papers they had graded, most of the participating teachers were very concerned with the mechanics of written English.[2]

Some scholars are interested in mechanics as a means of inference about the way children perceive and think: by looking at the words they use, for example, it's possible to learn about the ways children view the world; by looking at the complexity of grammatical structures in the essays, it's possible to make inferences about the complexity of ideas children have.[3]

Exercises Used in the Analyses

All of the essays written by 9, 13 and 17-year-olds were collected under uniform conditions. Groups of no more than a dozen children were asked to repond to all the exercises in an exercise package. Young adults and out-of-school 17-year-olds wrote their complete exercise packages at home in individual sessions.

Essay exercises, such as the ones used for writing mechanics, always appeared at the end of the packages, so the children and young adults wrote their essays after they had finished all the other exercises. Children at age nine were shown a color picture of a forest fire and were asked to write a story about what was happening in the picture. They were given fifteen minutes in which to respond.

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[2] Diederich, P.B., John French, and Sydel T. Carleton, "Factors in the Grading of Essays", Research Bulletin RB61-15, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, 1961.

[3] See Braddock, Richard, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer, Research in Written Composition, National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, 1963, p. 10.

Nine-year-old Essay Exercise

Here is a picture of something sad that is going on in the forest. Look at the picture for a while. Do you see the forest fire? Write a story about what is happening in the picture. This is an important story because you want people to know about this sad event.

Thirteen-and 17-year-olds, in groups of about 12 each, were asked to write an essay about someone they admired. They were given thirty minutes to compose and write their essays.

> Most of us look up to some famous person as a representative of the things we believe in or as the kind of person we would like to be. This person may come from any part of our society. For instance, we might admire Winston Churchill or Martin Luther King, Walter Schirra or Mickey Mantle, Florence Nightingale or Barbra Streisand. No matter where this person comes from or what kind of work he or she does, however, we can recognize such traits of greatness as determination, physical courage, the ability to inspire others, and faithfulness to some worthy cause.
>
> Think about a famous person whom you admire. Select a particularly admirable characteristic or quality of that person--such as Mickey Mantle's courage in the face of crippling physical handicaps or Florence Nightingale's determination to fight against strong governmental pressure. Write an essay of about 200-250 words describing this characteristic or quality. Be sure to provide an illustration of it from the person's life. Try to show that the person is great at least partly because of this characteristic or quality.

The sample of young adults was asked to write a letter to a state highway commissioner stating a position on a proposed highway interchange. Each adult wrote at home, where the assessment materials were administered. Thirty minutes were allocated for writing the letter.

> Read the following news item carefully and then try to do the exercise that follows it.
>
> The State Highway Department announced today that it is considering plans for an additional interchange on the expressway between Market Beach and the state capitol. The new interchange would provide access to the historic Windsor Valley through the village of Windsorville, and State Highway 260. Highway Commissioner Oliver P. Stroud said that his department had no plans originally to locate an interchange at Windsorville, but official opinion was swayed by a strong campaign led by Windsorville Mayor Charles Kronbacher. Commissioner Stroud quoted a letter from the Mayor: "Windsorville has slept long enough in the colonial past. That was 200 years ago, and times change. Bringing in the people who will develop the valley will bring us up to the times and lower the tax rate, too." Commissioner Stroud admitted, however, that there is opposition to the proposed construction. Township Committeeman Milton Swift has already expressed his official opposition in

an open letter to township residents. Swift cited such problems as unwanted traffic, broken zoning ordinances, and loss of the valley's historical and rural tradition.

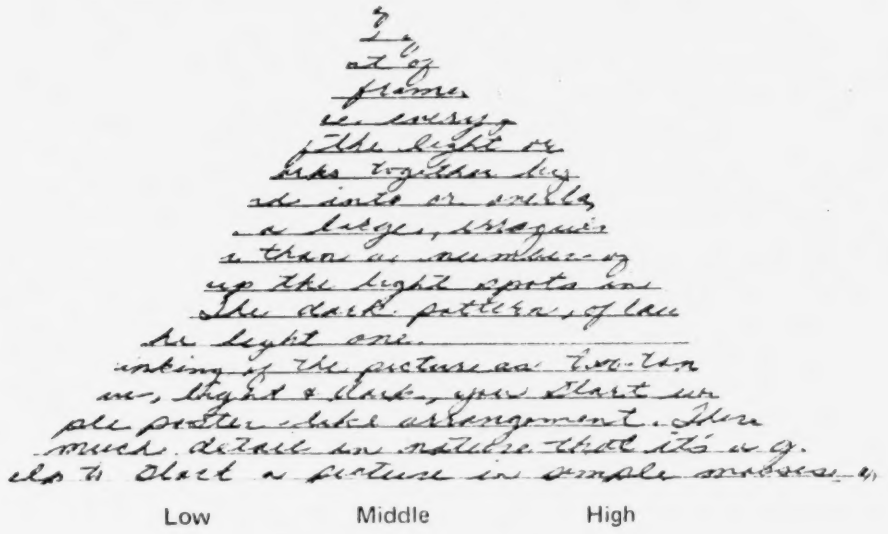
Let us say that you are a resident of Windsorville and have definite feelings about the Highway Department's plans. In the space below write a letter to Commissioner Stroud, telling him how you feel about the planned interchange and why you feel that way.

The Analyses

Four different analyses were made of the essays written for each exercise (the analyses are summarized in Table 1-1). In the first analysis English teachers experienced at grading children's essays examined the responses for overall quality. Each paper was read by two different scorers, and the sum of their grades became the overall quality score for the paper. As they read, the scorers didn't look at specific attributes, they didn't count errors, for example, or pay special attention to diction, sophistication of ideas, or any other writing attribute. They simply read each paper, formed an opinion of its overall quality, and gave it a grade reflecting that quality. (A more complete description of the scoring procedures can be found in Appendix A.)

After the overall quality analysis was completed, a distribution of the papers was constructed to see how many papers received each overall quality score. In general, the distributions (one for each exercise) showed that the largest number of essays fell in the middle quality range and few papers received very high or very low scores.

Figure 1-1: A generalized illustration of the distribution of overall quality scores for each exercise.



The second analysis was simply a counting of the mechanical errors in each essay. The error counts were made by experienced English teachers who were working on doctorates in English. They read each essay and counted errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, agreement (subject/verb, gender, number, etc.), improperly used sentence fragments, run-on sentences, awkward constructions, faulty paragraphing, and word choice. (A complete description of these errors can be found in Appendix B.) Each essay was scored separately by two different teachers. Since the teachers didn't always agree with each other on the number of errors they found, the scores for each essay were averaged for both scorings. In other words, if one teacher found two awkward constructions in an essay, and a second found three in the same essay, the paper was credited with 2.5 awkward constructions.

The error counts analysis was used to find areas where children and young adults encountered difficulties and areas where problems were minimal. But, unfortunately, error counts present a limited picture; they only tell how often things were done incorrectly. They do not tell what kinds of things were done correctly or indicate what kinds of things were not done at all. In order to find this out National Assessment performed the characterization and the computer analyses. These analyses did not involve all of the essays written for each exercise. They concentrated upon only three groups of essays excerpted from each total distribution: lower quality essays (papers falling at roughly the 15th centile of the overall quality score distribution), middle quality essays (papers falling at roughly the 50th centile), and higher quality essays (papers falling at roughly the 80th centile). Because papers were taken from these points, the lower quality group does not include the lowest quality essays and the higher quality group does not include the highest quality essays.

The characterizations were performed by judges with extensive backgrounds in the teaching of writing and literature (at primary, secondary, and university levels), and linguistics. The judges read essays at the higher, middle, and lower levels of quality (according to the overall quality score) looking especially at the nine areas the graduate students examined in the error counts analysis: punctuation, spelling, capitalization, agreement (subject/verb, gender), awkward constructions, faulty paragraphing, and word choice errors. But rather than counting errors, these judges described the essays according to the nine categories. They characterized the essays at each level of quality according to the punctuation they contained, the adequacy of the spelling, and so on. They described the correct aspects of the papers as well as the incorrect, and they indicated what the children and young adults were attempting, what they were accomplishing, and what they might have done. These characterizations provided the insights which made the error counts meaningful.

The fourth analysis (the computer analysis) also provided background information about the essays. The higher, middle, and lower quality essays were punched on IBM cards precisely as the children had written them; if errors appeared in the essays, the errors were punched on the cards. The only editing of the essays involved abbreviations--all periods were eliminated because the computer would mistakenly take them to indicate the ends of sentences. (See Figure 1-2 for an example of a keypunched essay.)

A computer using a specially written program examined the keypunched essays looking for six specific qualities of writing[4]: Fluency, the first specific quality, is related to the quantity of ideas represented in each paper. The ideas may be tightly reasoned arguments, or simply a series of generalizations. The second specific quality is spelling, which simply reflects correct and incorrect spellings in the essays. The third specific quality, diction, reflects the range of vocabulary and word choice in the essays. Sentence structure, the fourth quality, indicates whether each essay contains all simple sentences, a mixture of simple and more complex sentences, or almost all complicated sentences which may or may not be grammatically sound. The fifth specific quality, punctuation, reflects several kinds of punctuation marks which in turn reflect complexity of ideas, emphasis, and certain kinds of subordination of thought. The last specific quality, paragraph development, indicates whether each paper contains one long paragraph with multiple ideas, one idea per paragraph, or many short paragraphs all considering the same idea.

Organization of This Report

There are separate chapters in this report for each age group: Chapter 2 describes the essays written by 9-year-olds, Chapter 3 reports on 13-year-olds, Chapters 4 and 5 describe 17-year-olds and young adults, respectively. Each chapter begins with an introductory statement about particularly important aspects of the essays that age group wrote. This should provide a background for understanding results of the four analyses.

The results of the four analyses (overall quality, error counts, characterization, and computer) are presented under six headings in this report: essay length, paragraphing, punctuation and capitalization, sentence structure, agreement, and words (spelling, vocabulary and usage).

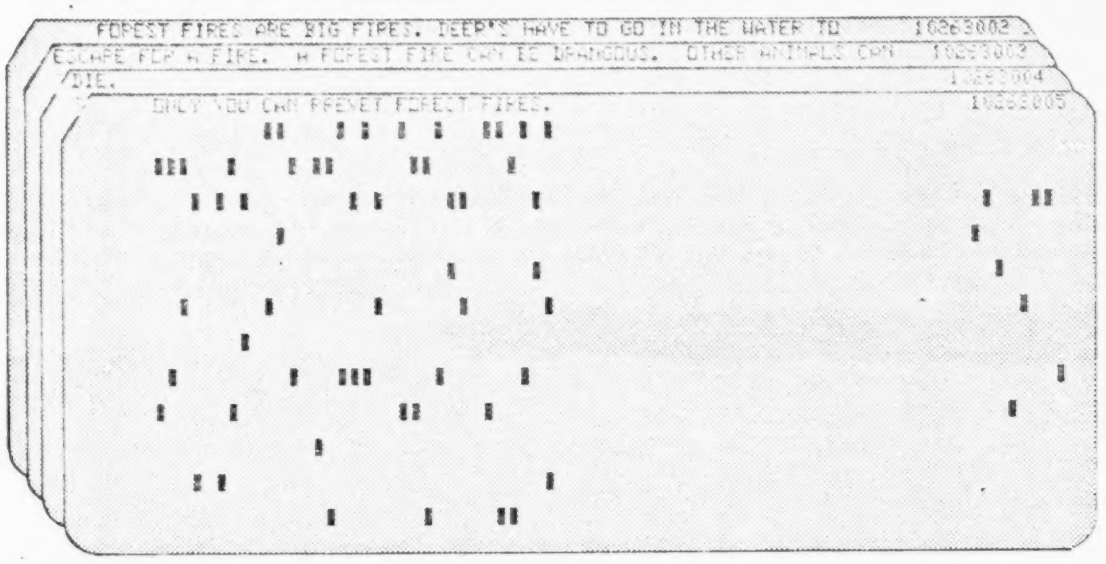
---

[4] See Appendix D for a description of the computer analysis.

Figure 1-2: Example of an essay prepared for the computer analysis. The essay was transcribed onto cards precisely as the child wrote it--preserving all errors.

Forest fires are big fires. Deers have to go in the water to escape for a fire. A forest fire can be dangous. Then animals can die.

Only you can prevet forest fires.


FOREST FIRES ARE BIG FIRES. DEER'S HAVE TO GO IN THE WATER TO 1026300
ESCAPE FOR A FIRE. A FOREST FIRE CAN BE DANGOUS. OTHER ANIMALS CAN 1026300
DIE. 1026300
ONLY YOU CAN PREVET FOREST FIRES. 1026300

The section devoted to essay length contains information about word counts and relative length at each quality level, while paragraphing presents some observations about essay organization. The section on punctuation and capitalization includes information about error counts, computer anslyses and the judges' analyses of skill in both activities. Under the heading sentence structure there is data about the number of sentence fragments, run-on sentences and awkward constructions at each quality level, and under agreement, some remarks about successful and unsuccessful treatment of agreement situations in the papers. The section on words is comprised of error counts for spelling and homonym confusion, as well as judges' reflections about vocabulary size and sophistication at various levels.

The summary for each chapter briefly recaps the most important conclusions which have been drawn about the essays and the children who wrote them. The summary will only tell what the conclusions were, not how they were reached.

The last chapter of this report contains a series of cautious, tentative statements about differences between the papers of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds, and young adults.

The examples of student and adult writing presented in this report are all labelled and printed in upper case letters. Very often, it was easiest and most informative to present only a passage from an essay to illustrate a point, but occasionally an entire essay was included. Unless an example is identified as a complete essay, it represents an excerpt only. Often, these illustrations contain multiple problems, but only one kind of problem is being considered in the accompanying text. Do not let the additional errors bother you. They've been described elsewhere in the chapter.

How to Interpret the Results

The results of any study always reflect the way the data were collected. Accordingly, the results of this study should be interpreted in light of the exercises used and the administration conditions.[5] It is possible that the results might have been different if other exercises had been used, or if the children and young adults had been encouraged to proofread their work, for example. (Proofreading was neither encouraged nor discouraged.)

[5] Administration procedures are described in each chapter.

There is another reason why one should interpret these mechanical measurements cautiously. The overall quality scores were used as the backbone of the analyses; all the error counts, all the measurements, and the characterizations were made within the overall score categories called "higher, middle, and lower. But because of the way overall quality scorers were assigned (on the basis of unspecified attributes), it is not necessarily true that papers received scores because they had certain errors or didn't have others. In other words, the errors and measurements are characteristics of papers at each level of quality, but the papers did not necessarily receive grades because they contained errors or had measurements of some particular value.

Consider an analogous situation: It's true, of course, that fires requiring the greatest number of fire trucks do the greatest amount of damage--the more fire trucks at a fire, the more damage the fire does. But it would be incorrect to believe this means that the fire trucks were responsible for the damage. The fire caused the damage (damage being one characteristic of the fire), and the fire attracted the fire trucks (fire truck attendance being another characteristic of the fire).

Similarly, essays have characteristics. One characteristic of an essay might be its overall quality score, another might be the mechanical errors it contains. And it is not necessarily true that the errors determined the score.

Table 1-1. An overview of the analyses performed on the essays.

Analysis	Performed by	Attributes of the Essays Examined	Results of the Analysis
Overall quality	English teachers who were trained, experienced scorers.	Overall quality in <u>each</u> essay--no attempt was made to focus upon any particular writing attributes.	The results of the analysis were used to identify papers representing higher, middle, and lower quality. The essays identified were used in the <u>characterization</u> and <u>computer</u> analysis described below.
Error counts	Graduate students in English who had experience as English teachers.	Errors of nine different kinds were counted in <u>each</u> essay. The kinds of errors were: punctuation, spelling, capitalization, run-on sentences, improperly used sentence fragments, word choice, awkward construction, paragraphing, and agreement.	The number of errors provided some information about how children and young adults write. The error counts also pointed out some aspects of writing where children are in the greatest need of improvement, others where no remedial work is needed at all.
Characterization	Judges: English teachers, English scholars, and a linguist.	Higher, middle, and lower quality essays (as identified by the overall quality analysis) were examined to describe the varieties and natures of both the errors and correct constructions, etc., in the essays.	The results of the analysis were statements about the essays at the three levels of quality. The statements provided a background for <u>understanding the kinds of errors that occurred</u>.
Computer	A computer using a program written for essay analysis.	The computer examined higher, middle, and lower quality essays (as indicated by the overall quality analysis) for the presence of particular attributes.	The information resulting from the computer analysis provided additional background for interpreting the error counts and the characterizations.

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Table 1-2. How the results of the four analyses are reported: the reporting categories.

Reporting Categories	Aspects Included in the Category			
	Overall Quality*	Error & Word Counts	Characterization	Computer Analysis
Essay length		Number of words per essay		Number of words per essay
Paragraphing	Results reported for higher, middle, and lower quality papers.	Number of paragraphing errors.	Description of the development of paragraphs within the essays.	Specific qualities relating to paragraph development.
Punctuation & capitalization	Same as above	Number of punctuation and capitalization errors.	Description of nature and variety of both punctuation & capitalization.	Specific qualities relating to punctuation & capitalization.
Sentence structure	Same as above	Number of improperly used sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and awkward constructions.	Descriptions of sentence structure: nature and variety of sentences.	Specific qualities relating to sentence structure.
Agreement	Same as above	Number of agreement errors.	Description of the nature and variety of correctly and incorrectly handled agreement situations.	
Spelling & word usage	Same as above	Number of spelling and word choice errors.	Descriptions of the nature and variety of the errors; the nature of the vocabularies used.	Specific qualities relating to spelling, diction, and fluency.

* See Appendix A and C.

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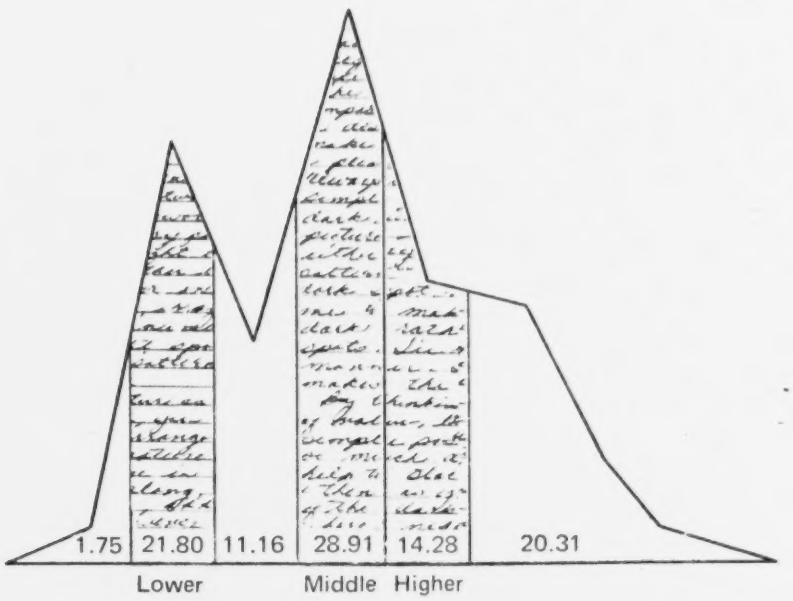
CHAPTER II

Age 9: The Forest Fire Exercise

Introduction

All the "forest fire" essays written by 9-year-olds were used in the overall quality and error counts analyses.[1] The essays included in the characterization and computer analyses, though, were taken from three points along the overall quality scale close to the fifteenth, fiftieth, and eightieth centiles.

Figure 2-1: Distribution of overall quality scores for the 9-year-old essays. The higher, middle, and lower quality points are indicated, along with the percentage of papers selected for characterization and computer analysis at each level. (1.7% of the 9-year-olds wrote nothing at all.)[2]



Overall Quality

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[1] See Table 1-1, Chapter 1, for an overview of the four analyses performed on these essays.

[2] See Appendix E for a complete description of this distribution, and Appendix F for examples of essays receiving the highest overall quality scores.

In general, the papers were very simple. The children who wrote them, of course, were 9 years old, and had no more than two or three years experience with written language. As a result, the words they used were commonplace, their sentences followed only the simplest patterns, and they rarely employed any punctuation besides commas and periods.

Here are some examples of higher quality papers.

Passage 2-1

THERE IS SOMETHING SAD GOING ON IN THE FORREST. SOME CARELESS PERSON HAS STARTED A TERABLE FIRE IN THE FORREST.

YOU CAN SEE THE HELPLESS LITTLE ANIMALS IN THE PICTURE TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THE FIRE. YOU CAN ALSO SEE THAT FIRE REALLY DOESEN'T LOOK SO NICE.

Passage 2-2

ONCE THE FOREST CATCH ON FIRE AND ALL THE DEAR AN OTHER ANIMALS WERE IN THE FIRE THEY RAN & SWAM IN THE WATER TRYING TO GET OUT OF THE FIRE. THE FIRE HAD SPRENDED & SPRENDED AND THE TREES WERE FALLING DOWN. THE TREES FELL IN THE WATER. THERE WAS A LITTLE RACOON WHO WAS ON A STONE, IF THE FIRE HAD REACHED HIM IT WOULD HAVE BURNED HIM UP, IF HE WOULDN'T SWAM LIKE THE DEARS DID, OR EITHER JUMPED ON THE ROCK IF HE COULD AND ESCAPE FROM THE FOREST. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE END OF HIM. IF HE ESCAPED I AM SURE GLAD HE DID BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE GOTTEN BURNED UP, AND HE WOULDN'T HAVE ANOTHE LIFE. BUT I STILL THINK HE ESCAPED WITHOUT THE FIRE CATCHING HIM.

Passage 2-3

A MAN WAS IN A FOREST HE WAS SMOKING A SIGAR. THEN HE DROPPED IT. HE DID NOT KNOW IT IT STARLED A FIRE. FIRST IT GOT BIG AND BIGGER AND ALL AT ONCE IT GAVE A BIG BOOM. ALL THE FOREST AMINALS TRIED TO GET AWAY FROM THE FIRE, SOME DID AND SONE DID NOT.

THE BEES WERE EATING THERE HONY WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN ANOTHER BOOM CAME AND THE TREE FELL THE BEES DIED.

THEN POLICEMEN CAME AND FIRE MAN AND PEOPLE THAT WERE IN THE FOREST WERE KILLED.

THEN THE FIRE WAS OUT AND THERE LAYED THE MAN DEAD WHO STARTED THE FIRE.

These papers are representative in terms of their sentence structure and their spelling (both will be discussed later in this chapter). They also reveal several degrees of writer involvement, ranging from the impersonality of Passage 2-1 to the identified personal feelings in the last two sentences of Passage 2-2. The children who wrote these papers apparently had no difficulty reading complete scenarios into the stimulus materials. Passage 2-2 exemplifies this imaginative activity, though not nearly as well as Passage 2-3.

In almost all cases (with papers like Passage 2-1 being the only exceptions), the higher quality papers contained many specific details. But the middle quality papers, typified by the following examples, were very general and lacking in detail.

Passage 2-4

A MAN OR WOMAN DROPED A MATCH OR CIGERET. IT GEW AND IT STARTED A BIG FIRE. THE ANIMALES ARE SWIMMING FOR THEIR LIVES. THE RACON IS CROSSING ON THE ROKES. AND THEY GO OFF THE WATER FALL AND DIE. THE FON IS CKARED.

Passage 2-5

THERE IS A FOREST FIRE THE AMAILS ARE RUNING AWAY FORM IT SO THEY WELL NOT GOT HURT. MOTHER DEER AND FATHER DEER TOO. THAY ARE TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THE FIRE. AMANILS ARE AFRIED OF FIRE AND THATS WAY THAY ARE RUNING AWAY.

Lower quality papers were generally less coherent than the higher two groups of essays, and in many instances it was difficult for the judges to understand what the children were attempting to communicate. The following passage is representative of such papers.

Passage 2-6

> THE DEETS IS IN THE WATHE THE IS BIG. IT IS CASEN THE TREES ON FIRE. THE ROCK IS IN THE WATHE. THE RAVE IS BIG THRE TREES IS FOLLOWING DOWN. IN TO THE WATHE. THE TREES IS BIG AND TALE. SOME RAVE THE ROCK IS. AND THE IS GETAN BIG GOING AWAY AND SAY AWAY. AND FALL IS LITTLE. SOME RAVE THE BALL IS BIG.

Other lower quality papers were more understandable, though they were much shorter and said very little.

Passage 2-7

> A LITTLE DEER'S HOME IS BEING BURN UP. THEY ARE GOING TO BE KILL. THEY SWIM ACCROSS THE RIVER HOPING TO BE SAVED.

Length

At age nine, all essays were short. However, the best essays tended to be longer than essays of lesser quality. Similarly, poorer quality essays tended to be shorter than better quality essays.

Paragraphing

Most papers written by 9-year-olds were only one paragraph in length. It's not at all clear whether the lack of multiple paragraphs is due to the topic (which may not require much paragraphing) or to the respondents' inability to create paragraphs.

Less than one percent of all the papers contained paragraphing errors.[3] The paragraphs in the higher quality group were longer than those in the middle quality group, the middle quality papers were in turn longer than those in the lower quality group.

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[3] See Appendix B for a description of paragraphing errors.

Punctuation and Capitalization

Almost half of all the papers contained no punctuation errors[4], and another quarter of them contained only one. The reason that there were so few errors is that the 9-year-olds provided themselves with few opportunities to punctuate. The higher and middle quality papers both contained about the same number of errors (usually about one and one-half per paper) while the much briefer lower quality papers had about one error.

Higher quality papers. The judges described the punctuation in these papers as being erratic and limited. First, the only punctuation mark the children regularly used was a comma (other marks such as colons, semicolons, quotation marks and parentheses appeared in less than one-half percent of the papers). Secondly, commas were often used both correctly and incorrectly within the same paper. In the following passages students used commas correctly.

Passage 2-8

MEAN WHILE ANIMALS ARE LOSEING THEIR HOMES, AND TREES ARE BEING KILLED.

Passage 2-9

THEY SWAM TO SOME ROCKS AND THEY MIGHT HURT THEMSELVES, TOO.

Passage 2-10

THERE IS A RACOON, DEER, MOOSE.

Passage 2-11

THE FIRE STARTED, AND WAS GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER.

The judges believed that their punctuation indicated that the writers of high quality papers knew when a comma was needed, but they weren't quite sure where to place it.

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[4] See Appendix B for a description of punctuation errors.

Apostrophes were usually used correctly in common contractions (e.g., DON'T), though there was occasional confusion with contractions involving forms of the verb to be (e.g., THATS). The use of apostrophes indicating possession was similarly erratic, with children occasionally neglecting to include them (e.g., FIRES SMOK) and, more often, including them when they weren't needed (THE DEER'S RACON'S ANTOLOPE'S ARE GOING).

Middle quality papers. These papers were similar to the higher quality ones in that they contained only commas as internal punctuation marks (colons, etc., appeared even less frequently than they did in the higher papers). Commas appeared less frequently than in the higher quality papers, and, when they did appear, they were less often used correctly and more often inappropriately placed. The following passage is one of the best punctuated sentences in the middle quality papers.

Passage 2-12

THE LAST MIGHT HE STAYED THERE, HE BUILT A CAMPFIRE AND WENT TO SLEEP.

More commonly, passages containing commas looked like this:

Passage 2-13

THE WATER WAS RUF, AND HARD TO SWIM ACROSS THE LAKE.

Apostrophes appeared in these papers with the same inconsistency as commas. On many occasions, apostrophes were used when they were required (e.g., in contractions such as DON'T and in some possessives, such as MOTHER'S CHILD); but in some cases, they appeared when they were clearly not required (TWO DEERS' ARE IN THE WATER) or they were not used when they were needed (THATS WHY THAY ARE RUNING AWAY and OVER THE DEARS HEAD).

Lower quality papers. The judges indicated there was a bare minimum of punctuation in these papers. Indeed, over three-quarters of the papers contained not a single comma, because they were so short and so simply written (see Passages 2-6 and 2-7). It is not surprising, then, that more than half of them had no errors at all, and that when punctuation errors did appear, they were errors of omission.

Capitalization

Capitalization errors tended to appear less frequently in the 9-year-old papers than most of the other kinds of errors.[5] About seventy percent of the papers had none of them, and another sixteen percent had only one. In other words, only about fourteen percent of the 9-year-olds made capitalization errors more than twice in an essay.

Capitalization errors appeared slightly less frequently in high quality papers than they did in middle or lower quality papers. The latter two groups had roughly equal error frequencies.

Higher quality papers. While most higher quality papers were free of capitalization errors, those containing errors were inconsistent: they contained both correct and incorrect capitalization. In some cases, the errors were probably due to carelessness (failing to capitalize the first word in a sentence, for example, when the first letters in all other sentences were capitalized). But in other cases, words were capitalized that shouldn't have been. The judges suggested that the writers of these papers knew that important titles deserve capitalization, so they capitalized words like mother, father, and ranger, things that are important to them and to the story.

Middle quality papers. These papers looked very much like the higher quality papers: their capitalization was basically sound, and their errors were due to carelessness or the improper capitalization of words like mother and ranger.

Lower quality papers. While the number of errors per paper for lower quality papers was the same as the number of errors for middle quality papers, the number of errors per hundred words (error rate) was higher, since the lower quality papers were so much shorter.

The judges indicated that the first word in a sentence was often left uncapitalized, and that many nouns, such as deer or tree were capitalized. They suggested that the children who wrote these papers had some idea of when to use capitals and when not to, but the idea was very incomplete.

Sentence Structure

Sentence fragments or run-on sentences appeared in about half the papers[6] and the run-on sentences tended to appear more often than the sentence fragments. If we assume the appearances of sentence fragments implies that a

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[5] See Appendix B for a description of capitalization errors.

[6] See Appendix B for a description of sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

child does not know what a sentence is, and if we assume run-on sentences are written by children who know what sentences are but not how to punctuate them, then we might conclude that more 9-year-olds know what a sentence is than know how to punctuate sentences.

The lower quality papers as a group had fewer fragments and run-ons than the higher two groups, again because the lower quality papers were the shortest.

Higher quality papers. The judges noted that students who wrote these papers were inconsistently skillful in their construction of sentences, just as they had been inconsistently capable of correct punctuation. In many of the essays, judges found correct--though simple--sentences followed by similar, though incorrect, sentences. For example, the paper containing the next two passages was relatively complex and contained both the sentence in Passage 2-14, which is sound, and the sentence in 2-15, which is not.

Passage 2-14

IN THE PICTURE YOU SEE 3 DEER TRYING TO CROSS A STREAM AND A RACOON ON A ROCK, AND TREES FALLEN DOWN IN THE WATER.

Passage 2-15

THE OTHER SIDE IS ALRIGHT, SOME ANIMALS WENT TO THE THE SIDE THERE WAS NO FIRE.

And the sentence fragment below appeared, like most fragments, in association with otherwise sound sentences.

Passage 2-16

I GIVE THE LITTLE ONE A LITTLE PLATE OF MEAT. AND THE BIG ONE A BIG PLATE OF MEAT.

It is interesting to note that the run-on sentence in Passage 2-15 and the sentence fragment in Passage 2-16 (and most of the other run-ons and sentence fragments these examples represent) can be remedied by correct punctuation. In the case of the run-on sentence, a semi-colon would resolve the problem; and a comma in place of the period preceding the sentence fragment would make it part of a longer, more acceptable sentence. It seems here, then, that sentence problems and punctuation problems are often inseparable.

The correct sentences appearing in these papers tended to be simple and declarative (only five percent of the papers contained questions, and three

percent exclamatory statements). Their simplicity is reflected in their length, which averaged about eleven words and rarely exceeded twenty.

The few questions and exclamatory statements appearing were far more complex than the declarative statements that appeared predominantly in the papers. Passages 2-17 and 2-18, for instance, reflected a high degree of involvement and a sophisticated awareness of audience that the judges felt was rare among 9-year-olds.

Passage 2-17

THEY ARE GOING TO BE TRAPPED!

Passage 2-18

WILL YOU TRY TO STOP FOREST FIRES?

By and large, these children used exclamation points only for emphasis, and question marks only when they asked rhetorical questions or made simple pleas like that in Passage 2-18. Occasionally, a question mark was used to indicate a quandary, as was the case when a writer described the animals in the picture and said:

Passage 2-19

THEY DIDNT KNOW WHERE TO GO?

Middle quality papers. Many of the run-on sentences in these papers were similar to those in the higher quality papers--they could be redeemed by a change in punctuation. However, run-ons also appeared that could not be saved with commas, colons, and semicolons, and these run-ons, the judges agreed, indicated a basic confusion about sentence elements and how they can be combined into sentences. Such a sentence appears in the following passage.

Passage 2-20

ONCE THERE WAS A FIRE IN THE FOREST IT WAS A BIG ONE AND A FATHER DEER WAS HELPING BABY DEER IT WAS HARED TO GET OUT OF THE FIRE SO THEY HAD TO SWIM ACROSS THE RIVER IT WAS HARD FOR THE BABY DEER TO GET ACROSS THE RIVER AND THE FIRE WAS SPREEDING AT THEN THE FATHER DEER HELPED THE BABY DEER AND THEY MADE IT TO A SAFE PLACE AND LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

Some sentence fragments, like some run-ons, could be corrected by a change in punctuation (Passage 2-21, for example). But others could not. Like the fragment in Passage 2-22, they seemed unrelated to the drift of the essay.

Passage 2-21

WHOEVER STARTED THIS FIRE WAS VERY UNKIND. BECAUSE THE ANIMALS DO NOT KNOW WHERE TO GO NOW.

Passage 2-22

IT RECKS ARE FOREST AND HERTS ARE ANAMALS. IF SOME DAY WE WON'T HAVE A FOREST BECAUSE OF PEOPLE.

Such sentences suggested to the judges that the children who wrote them did not have a real grasp of what a sentence was.

The correct sentences in the middle quality papers tended to be simple and declarative. There were some questions and exclamatory statements, but they appeared less regularly and less effectively than they did in the higher quality papers.

Passage 2-23

ONE DAY IN A FOREST THERE WAS A FOREST FIRE!

Lower quality papers. The judges suggested that the children writing the lower quality papers had only the barest notion of what a sentence was. Many of the papers contained only extremely simple sentences that were correct (e.g., THER IS A FIER.) and many long strings of words unrecognizable as sentences. Because the children were unclear about what they were doing (the judges speculated), they produced a few long strings of words, usually uninterpretable or run together, causing the papers to have high average sentence lengths. Further, there was less variability in the sentence length of those papers than there was in other papers.

Awkwardness in all 9-year-old papers stemmed primarily from the deletion of crucial words.[7] Without the missing words, the sentences were either unclear or meant the opposite of what the writer had probably intended to say.

[7] See Appendix B for a descritpion of awkward constructions.

About half of all papers had at least one awkward sentence. The lower quality papers, however, tended to have more awkwardness than the middle or higher quality ones.

Higher quality papers. An example of awkwardness due to omission of words in these papers is:

Passage 2-24 (the word were is missing)

THERE MORE MEN.

Awkwardness in these papers also appeared when children appeared not to understand that certain terms were not mutually exclusive. In Passage 2-25, for example, the student writer did not realize that a CRULE PARSON (person) could also be a CAMPER.

Passage 2-25

SOME CRULE PARSON OR CAMPER COULD HAVE . . .

Middle quality papers. The judges noted that awkwardness in these papers was often a result of omitted articles and misused prepositions. The following passages illustrate typical preposition problems:

Passage 2-26

. . . ALL THE FOREST WAS OF FIRE . . .

Passage 2-27

AND THE RACON IS LEPING TO ROCK TO ROCK.

Lower quality papers. The awkward constructions in these papers were apparently due to a variety of causes: the omission of words, improper choice of prepositions, inexact pronoun reference, and inept sentence construction. Passage 2-6 begins to exemplify the nature of the problem. Another example is contained in the following complete paper.

Passage 2-28

THE DEAR IT RAN IN TO THE WEAER OVER TO THE.
AND THEY. FAL THE.

At this point, three general statements about the papers 9-year-olds write have emerged: first, all the papers are generally simple in nature. When they are correct, the punctuation and sentence structure are very limited. Second, the high quality papers are inconsistent. While they may contain correct punctuation use and solid, though simple, sentence structure, they also contain errors in sentences similar to correct ones. But more important, the structural errors seem to be resolvable with the addition or deletion of punctuation marks. Third, errors that cannot be corrected simply with punctuation appear in the middle quality papers and become more numerous in the lower quality papers. These errors imply an inadequate idea of what a sentence is and how punctuation might be used to facilitate expression.

Agreement

Fifty-seven percent of all the papers contained agreement errors. In the remaining 43% there were more errors in the higher quality papers than in the middle quality papers and more errors in the middle quality papers than in the lower ones.[8] The increase in the number of errors may be explained by two factors: first, the higher quality papers tended to be longer than the others (and therefore provided more opportunities for errors), and, second, the children who wrote the higher quality papers used constructions that were occasionally more complex and difficult than those appearing in the other papers.

Higher quality papers. The writers of these papers handled many agreement situations correctly, including those involving complicated subjects or predicates.

Passage 2-29

SOME ANIMALS RAN TO THE RIVER AND JUMPED IN.

But on other occasions, complex subjects and predicates proved to be difficult.

Passage 2-30

THERE WAS A BUCH AND A DOE TRYING TO SWIM ACROSS THE RIVER.

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[8] See Appendix B for a description of agreement errors.

Errors such as these appeared most often when the word THERE was involved (as in Passage 2-30), or when there were irregular plurals (such as DEER).

Middle quality papers. These papers contained the agreement problems already seen in the higher quality papers (involving THERE, plural nouns, and complex subjects and predicates), but other kinds of errors also appeared. For instance, some of these students apparently found managing sequences of tenses to be a difficult task.

Passage 2-31

SOME OF THE ANIMALS WOUDL GO TO TRY TO SWIM
AND IF THEY CAN'T SWIM THEY WOUDL DIE.

In this example, the writer started with WOUDL, a conditional, moved to the present tense CAN'T, and then shifted back to WOUDL again.

Lower quality papers. There were lower quality papers containing no agreement problems at all. By and large, they were very short, simple essays.

Passage 2-32 (a complete essay)

THERE IS A FIRE IN THE FOREST WHO IS GOING TO PUT
IT OUT. CAN YOU PUT IT OUT?

Other lower quality papers contained many agreement errors indicating (according to the judges) a real lack of knowledge about agreement. Problems in these papers looked like this:

Passage 2-33

SOMEBODY WAS CAMPING AND THAY WERE SMOKING . . .

Passage 2-34

. . . I THINK THE TREE ARE ABOUT TO GO DOWN.

Spelling and Word Usage

Wording was a key issue in these papers. The judges found an extremely limited vocabulary here, even in the higher quality papers. In general, the children stayed pretty close to factual descriptions of the forest fire and the animals, using adjectives and adverbs sparingly. The intensive VERY appeared often, modifying words such as BEAUTIFUL, TERRIBLE, and BIG.

Errors involving words appeared regularly.[9] Only a third of the papers were completely free of spelling errors, and about forty percent of the papers had multiple misspellings. Word choice errors appeared slightly less frequently, with forty percent of the papers having none at all.

Higher quality papers. Because of the limited vocabulary, the judges said, phrases like THE EGGS WOULD NOT HAVE BEN ABLE TO COME INTO THE WORLD AND SEE WHAT JOY IT BRINGS stood out as examples of good wording.[10] When the vocabulary was richest (for instance, THE ANIMALS FLED) the judges suspected a literary influence.

Misspellings did not seem to fall into any particular patterns; there were no groups of words that were harder or easier than other words. The judges felt the misspellings showed a "charming disregard for the word". The children were apparently more concerned about making a total statement than about spelling each word correctly:

Passage 2-35

> DO YOU LIKE IT WHEN SOMEONE BURNS YOUR HOUSE? WELL EITHER DO THE AMINILSS WHEN YOU BURN THERE HOUSE!

Particular groups of letters seemed to be rearranged with some regularity. Doubled consonants were often left undoubled (such as RUNING for running), letter orders were often rearranged (FIER for fire), and final consonants were left off (BURN for burns or burned). It should be noted, though, that deleted final consonants can reflect speech patterns rather than spelling inabilities.

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[9] See Appendix B for a description of errors involving spelling and word usage.

[10] Eggs refer to birds' eggs in a nest in a burning tree.

Homonyms[11] caused problems. Children used WITCH when which was required, BRAKE for break, etc. One paper contained the phrase no one knew as:

Passage 2-36

KNOW ONE NEW

Finally, there were some problems with the production of compound words. Instead of saying had to, one child created the word HATTO. Other children broke up compound words, so that away became A WAY, anywhere was spelled ANY WHERE, and maybe became MAY BE.

Word choice errors were often the result of adverb--adjective confusion, inappropriate use of adjectives (MOST OF THE ANIMALS GOT AWAY FROM THE FIRE AND JUST A LITTLE DIDN'T), or problems with negation. But these errors also stemmed from the incorrect choice of homonym, a regular occurrence. This kind of problem was predictable given the "charming disregard for the word" the judges speculated about when they considered spelling. If the word sounds right, and therefore communicates the intended meaning, what reason is there for choosing among homonyms?

Middle quality papers. The vocabulary in these papers was described by the judges as being even more restricted than in the high quality papers. The children created intensity through the use of repetition or the addition of words like VERY rather than through the choice of stronger, though otherwise synonymous, words. Specificity was often the result of numbers and dates (100 ANIMALS DIED, or ON NOVEMBER 25 1969 IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA) rather than the choice of particularly meaningful adjectives and adverbs.

Beyond the more restricted vocabulary, wording in these papers was very much like wording in the higher quality papers. The misspellings did not seem to follow any particular pattern, though certain combinations of letters which were particularly bothersome to writers of higher quality papers, were equally bothersome for these writers. The judges often found the letters necessary for a word, though not in the correct order--extraneous letters would appear and required letters would be missing. Children often used homonyms incorrectly, though the errors were more gross than in the higher papers, and words related to each other, like OF and OFF, were often interchanged.

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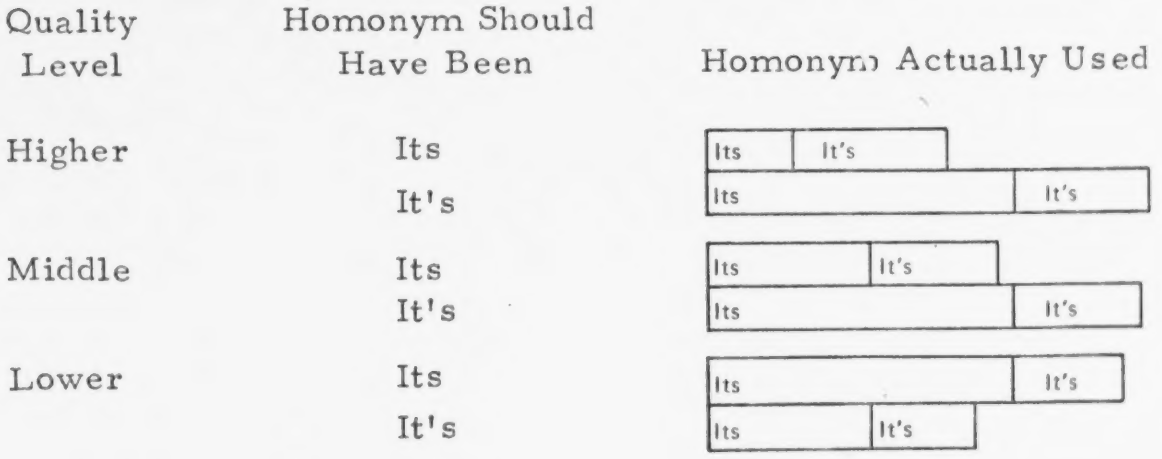
[11] In this report the term "homonym" will refer to both homonyms (words spelled and pronounced the same, but with different meanings, e.g., bear bear) and homophones (words pronounced the same, but with different spellings and meanings).

Lower quality papers. Many of the words appearing in these papers were not recognizable to the judges (see Passage 2-6 for examples of such words), and they had great difficulty deciding what the misspelled words were supposed to be. It is possible that the spellings were phonetic--that the children were trying to record the way the words sounded--but that they simply didn't know which letters were associated with which sounds.

Words spelled correctly (or recognizable as known words) constituted a very limited vocabulary. It is likely that the children who wrote these papers rarely had to choose between alternative expressions, since they had so few words with similar meanings in their vocabularies.

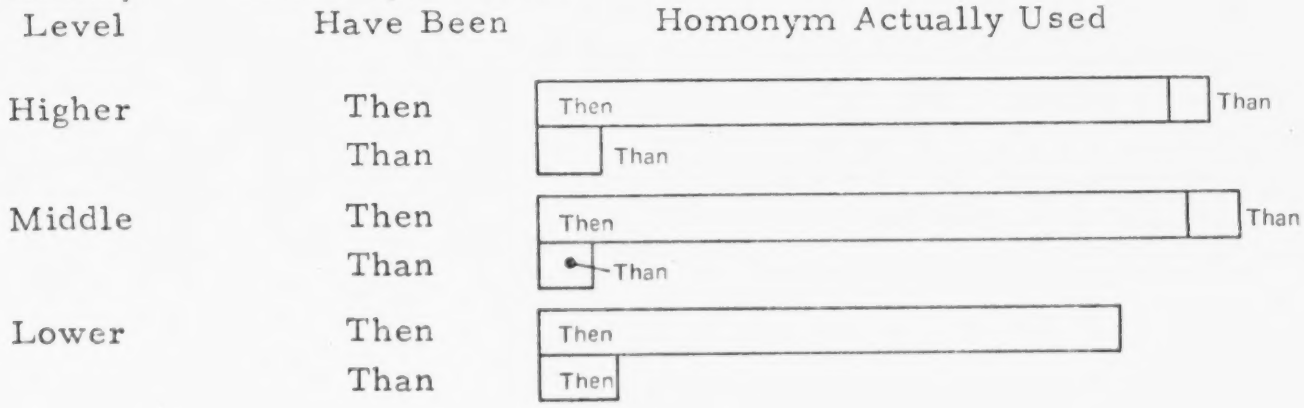
There are certain sets of homonyms that often cause problems for all writers. One set, its and it's, caused a considerable amount of difficulty for 9-year-olds. Even though the words appeared infrequently (about once every hundred papers in the low quality essays, every twenty papers for middle quality, and once every twenty-five papers in higher quality essays), the appearances were often incorrect. The writers of lower quality papers used its more often when it's was required, and it's most often when its was needed. This was not true for the middle and higher quality papers, though they regularly contained incorrect its/it's homonyms.

Figure 2-2: How its and it's were used in the essays written by 9-year-olds. The length of the bar for each homonym is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



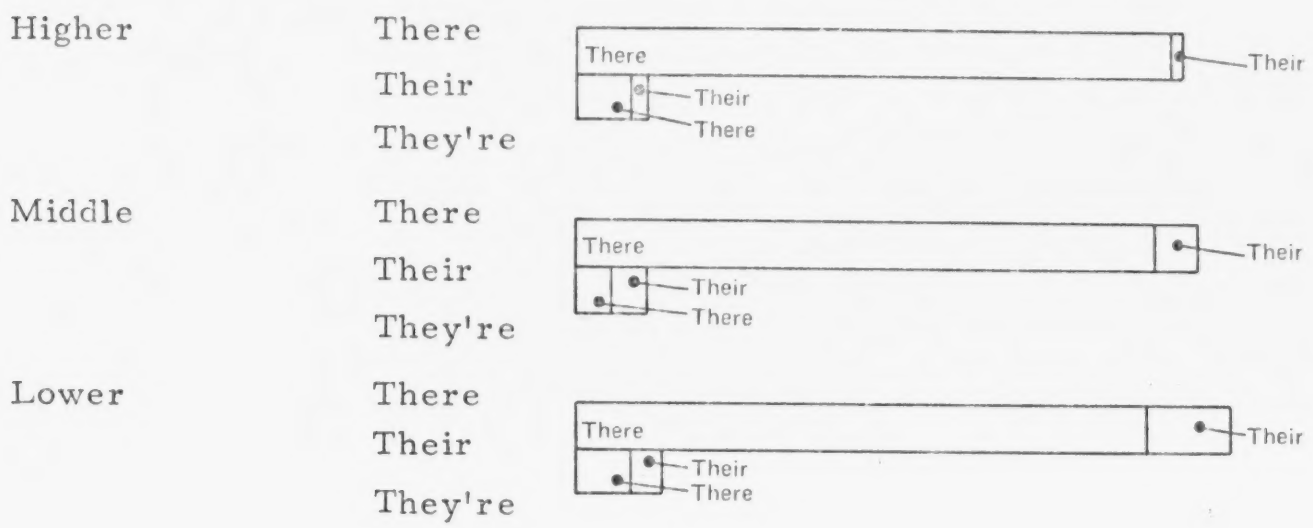
Then and than followed a much different pattern. First, the words appeared more frequently than its and it's. Six percent of the lower quality papers, twenty-four percent of the middle quality papers, and twenty-nine percent of the higher quality papers contained at least one of the homonyms. Second, then was used exclusively in the lower quality papers when either the temporal or the comparative word was needed. Third, the middle and higher papers used than whenever it was required, but they also used it occasionally when then was appropriate.

Figure 2-3: How then and than were used in the essays written by 9-year-olds. The length of the bar for each homonym is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



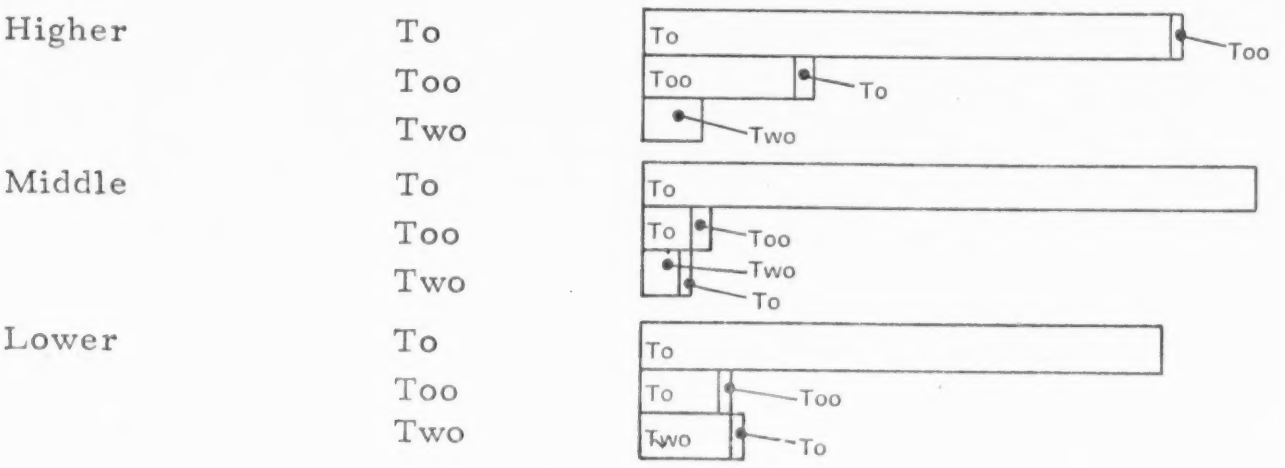
The there, their, and they're homonyms appeared regularly in the 9-year-old papers. These homonyms appeared less than once per paper in lower quality essays, while the middle and higher quality essays contained about one and one and a half appearances, respectively. The same pattern of homonym use appeared at all three quality levels: there was used most often when it was needed or when their or they're was required; their appeared occasionally when there should have been used; and they're (which was seldom called for) was always replaced with there.

Figure 2-4: How there, their, and they're were used in the essays written by 9-year-olds. The length of the bar for each homonym is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



On the average, at least one of the to, too, two homonyms appeared in each paper. On all occasions when two was required in the higher quality papers, and on most occasions when it was required in the middle and lower quality papers, two was used. In the latter two groups, too was the word used incorrectly when two should have been used. Too was the homonym receiving the greatest amount of misuse; only in the higher quality papers did it appear when it was required more often than another homonym. In the middle and lower quality papers, it was replaced with to more often than it was used correctly.

Figure 2-5: How to, too, and two were used in the essays written by 9-year-olds. The length of the bar for each homonym is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



Summary

The word "limited" probably best describes the competence in writing mechanics shown by these 9-year-olds. In this exercise, they revealed limited vocabularies, restricted skill in sentence construction, and incomplete understanding of the conventions of written English.

The higher quality papers were described as inconsistent, for the writers did not make errors every time the opportunity arose. Further, the constructions they created and the vocabulary they relied upon were severely restricted, and they adopted only the simplest patterns for the expression of their ideas.

Middle quality papers tended to be shorter and simpler than the higher quality papers. The same patterns appeared, with the students expressing mundane thoughts through commonplace words and simple sentences. Beyond their reduced length, the middle papers differed from the higher quality ones by having more errors, and their writers had a less complete grasp of the conventions of writing than did the writers of higher quality papers.

Some of the lower quality papers contained few errors because they were extremely short and utterly simple. Others were very difficult to read or understand. These writers have much to learn about written English.

Table 2-1 - Statistics for Age 9 forest fire exercise papers.

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurences: 0	1	2	3
Paragraphing	Error Counts	Number of Paragraphing Errors	High	+ *	+ *	98	2	0	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
	Computer Analysis	Number of Paragraphs	High	1.5	1.4	0	90	7	2
			Middle	1.9	1.5	0	94	4	1
			Low	3.5	1.5	0	96	2	0
		Mean Paragraph Length	High	**	6.4	Q_1 = 4.51		Q_3 = 8.27	
			Middle	**	5.0	3.16		6.90	
			Low	**	2.3	1.47		3.66	
Punctuation	Error Counts	Punctuation Errors	High	1.9	1.7	32	20	21	9
			Middle	2.2	1.6	33	29	18	9
			Low	2.5	1.1	52	26	13	4
	Computer Analysis	Number of Commas	High	.7	.8	69	14	9	3
			Middle	.6	.6	83	11	4	1
			Low	.5	.4	93	6	0	0
		Number of Colons	High	+ *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Middle	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
		Number of Semicolons	High	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Middle	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0

* Single stars indicate arithmetic means, otherwise they are trimeans (see Tukey, J., Exploratory Data Analysis, Limited Preliminary Edition, Addison-Wesley, 1970, p. 2-25).

** Double stars indicate values not reported because of inapplicability.

\+ A plus sign indicates a value greater than .00 and less than .05.

When much variability appears in the data, quartile values are reported: Q_1 is the 25th centile, Q_3 is the 75th centile.

Table 2-1 - continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Atrribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurences: 0	1	2	3
Punctuation cont'd		Number of Quotation Marks	High	0 *	+ *	99	0	1	0
			Middle	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
		Number of Parentheses	High	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Middle	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
Capitalization	Error Counts	Number of Capitalization Errors	High	.9	.8	68	16	8	3
			Middle	1.1	.9	61	20	8	3
			Low	1.7	.9	63	18	9	4
Sentence Structure	Error Counts	Sentence Fragments	High	.6	.6	86	12	2	0
			Middle	.6	.6	86	11	2	0
			Low	.6	.5	91	7	2	0
		Run-on Sentences	High	1.0	1.1	57	17	8	8
			Middle	1.2	1.3	50	20	10	8
			Low	1.6	1.0	52	19	12	6
	Computer Analysis	Number of Declarative Sentences	High	8.8	6.7	Q_1 = 5.02		Q_3 = 8.60	
			Middle	8.6	5.2		3.37		7.08
			Low	7.2	2.3		1.50		3.73
		Number of Interrogative Sentences	High	.1 *	+ *	96	3	1	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Low	0 *	+ *	98	2	0	0
		Number of Imperative Sentences	High	+ *	+ *	95	3	1	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	98	1	1	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0

Table 2-1 - continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors: Per 100 Words	Mean Errors: Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurences: 0	1	2	3
Sentence Structure cont'd	Computer Analysis cont'd	Mean Sentence Length	High	**	11.4	Q_1 = 8.74		Q_3 = 14.88	
			Middle	**	12.0		8.54		16.89
			Low	**	16.1		8.82		26.41
		S. D. Sentence Length	High	**	4.4	Q_1 = 2.85			6.22
			Middle	**	4.1		2.35		6.73
			Low	**	1.4		.47		3.34
	Error Counts	Awkward Constructions	High	1.1	1.1	53	26	11	8
			Middle	1.2	1.1	53	25	12	5
			Low	2.6	1.1	50	25	14	7
Agreement	Error Counts	Number of Agreement Errors	High	1.3	1.3	46	25	14	10
			Middle	1.4	1.1	49	27	13	5
			Low	1.7	1.0	58	25	8	6
Spelling and Word Usage	Error Counts	Misspellings	High	4.6	3.7	Q_1 = 5.67		Q_3 = 2.13	
			Middle	6.5	4.1		6.73		1.97
			Low	12.2	3.9		7.06		1.35
		Word Choice Errors	High	2.3	1.5	Q_1 = 3.44		Q_3 = .75	
			Middle	2.8	1.5		3.41		.86
			Low	3.6	1.3		2.50		.57
	Computer Analysis	Misspellings of Common Words	High	.6 *	.7 *	53	22	13	6
			Middle	1.2 *	.8 *	41	28	13	7
			Low	.4 *	.9 *	31	24	16	12
		Misspellings of Uncommon Words	High	4.1	3.7	Q_1 = 1.92		Q_3 = 5.82	
			Middle	5.0	3.4		1.72		5.60
			Low	10.7	4.0		1.84		6.65

Table 2-1 - continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurences: 0	1	2	3
Spelling and Word Usage cont'd		Misspellings of Proper Nouns	High	+ *	+ *	98	1	0	0
			Middle	+ *	0 *	99	0	0	0
			Low	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
		Mean Word Length	High	**	3.9	Q_1 = 3.69		Q_3 = 4.02	
			Middle	**	3.8	3.63		3.97	
			Low	**	3.6	3.34		3.79	
		S. D. Word Length	High	**	1.6	Q_1 = 1.45		Q_3 = 1.76	
			Middle	**	1.6	1.42		1.75	
			Low	**	1.4	1.25		1.63	
		Total Number of Words	High	**	73.6	Q_1 =59.32		Q_3 =90.09	
			Middle	**	57.6	44.95		73.05	
			Low	**	31.8	21.53		45.12	
		Number of Different Words	High	62.1	45.6	Q_1 =37.77		Q_3 =53.00	
			Middle	65.4	36.8	30.74		44.40	
			Low	76.3	22.1	16.48		28.63	

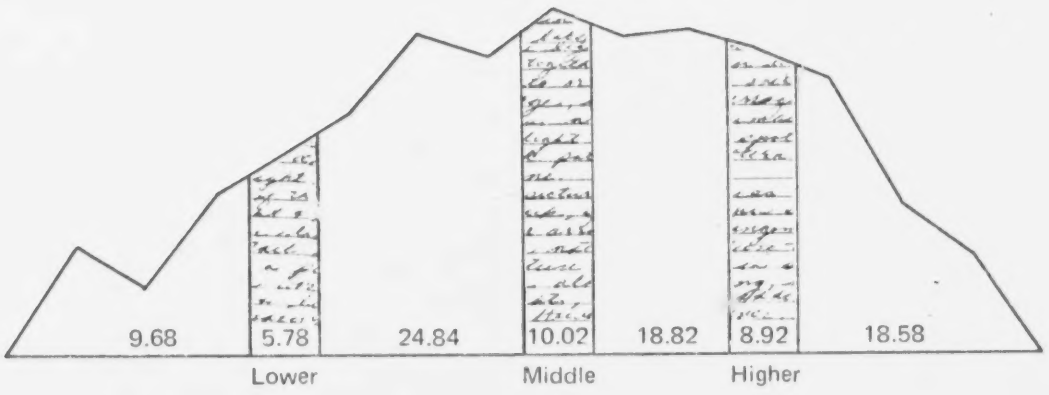
CHAPTER III

Age 13: The Famous Person Exercise

Introduction

All the famous person essays written by 13-year-olds were used in the overall quality and error counts analyses.[1] The essays considered in the characterization and computer analyses, though, were taken from the three points along the overall quality scale close to the 15th, 50th and 80th centiles.

Figure 3-1: Distribution of essay quality for the 13-year-old famous person essays. The higher, middle, and lower quality points are indicated, along with the percentage of papers selected for characterization and computer analysis at each level. 3.4% of the 13-year-olds wrote nothing at all.[2]



Overall Quality

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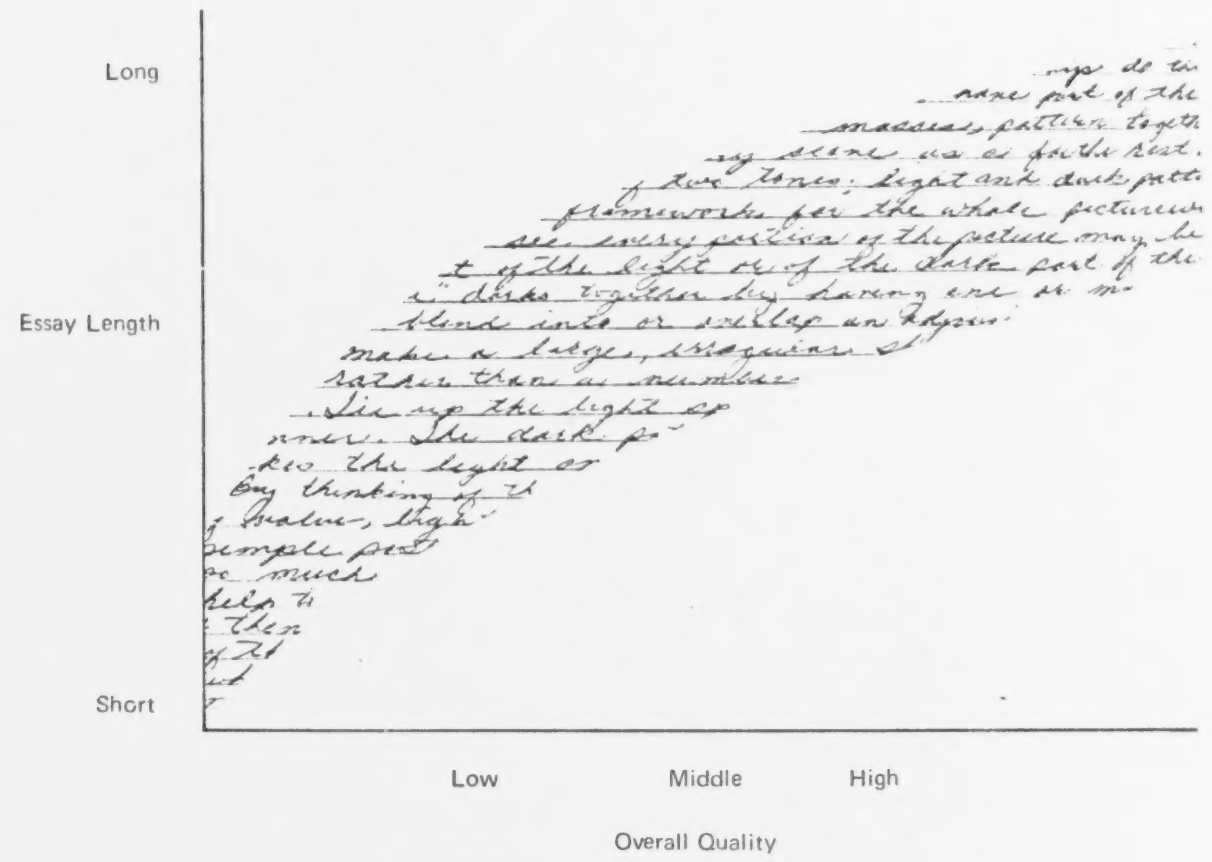
[1] See Table 1-1, Chapter 1, for an overview of the four analyses performed on these essays, and page 7 for a description of the group selection.

[2] See Appendix E for a complete description of this distribution, and Appendix F for examples of 13-year-old papers which received the highest overall quality scores.

Essay Length

Essays written by 13-year-olds for the famous person exercise displayed an interesting though hardly surprising phenomenon: the best essays were generally the longest; the worst essays, usually the shortest. The situation is graphically represented in Figure 3-1. While it is true that the best essays tend to be the longest, it is not true that all long essays were better than all short ones, or that good papers are good because they are long, short papers bad because they are short. The attribute problem described in Chapter 1 applies here: length is only one attribute of good papers; shortness is only one attribute of poor papers.

Figure 3-2: Essay quality and essay length in the 13-year-old famous person essays.



Let's consider first an example of a poor quality essay, one falling at about the 15th percentile in the distribution of essays.

Passage 3-1 (an entire essay)

> BARBRA STREISAND I LIKE HER MOVIES LIKE FUNNY GIRL IS A GREAT MOVIE AND I LIKE IT VERY MUCH AND SHE GOT A WARD FOR THE MOVIE AND I HOPE SHE MAKS A NOTHER MOVIE. IF SHE DOES MAKE A NOTHER MOVIE I THINK SHE WILL GET A WARD FOR THE MOVIE. TO BAD I DID NOT SEE FUNNY GIRL BUT MY FRIENDS SAY IT WAS A GOOD MOVIE AND IT WAS FUNNY. AND I MIGHT SEE THE MOVIE SOME DAY. I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE TO SAY.

Ignore issues of grammar and usage for the moment (they'll be discussed a little later on) and consider the ideas presented in this paper[3]: The author of Passage 3-1, like many writers of lower quality papers, presented only a few ideas, and they tended to be generalities (e.g., FUNNY GIRL IS A GREAT MOVIE) without any clarification or support. He may be right; Funny Girl may have been a great movie, but how can we agree with him without knowing what he means (by "great") or why he believed what he said? In brief, his ideas were as broad as they were shallow, and they required very little space for their expression. The child got in, stated his few generalizations, and got out.

Higher quality papers differed from those exemplified by Passage 3-1 in two important ways. The ideas expressed were more specific and well developed, and the essays were longer. In order to say precisely what he had on his mind, the author of a higher quality paper had to use more space. He wrote not only what he thought, but why he thought it. He gave the reader some ideas to consider and some basis for deciding whether to agree with him. Passage 3-2 is typical of such an essay.

Passage 3-2 (an entire essay)

> I ADMIRE GLEN CUNNINGHAM BECAUSE WHEN HE WAS LITTLE HE BURNED HIS LEGS IN A SCHOOL TRYING TO GET HIS BROTHER OUT. MOST KIDS WHEN THET GET HURT THEY WILL ACCEPT WHAT THE DOCTOR SAYS

---

[3] Quality of ideas is usually recognized as being the most important attribute determining the quality of writing. See Fosvedt, D.R., "Criteria for the Evaluation of English Composition," Journal of Educational Research, 1965, pp. 108-12, and Braddock, R., R. Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoen, Research in Written Composition, National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, Ill., 1963.

ABOUT IT. IF THE DOCTOR SAYS THAT THEY WILL NEVER WALK AGAIN, THEY ACCEPT IT AS A FACT THAT THEY WILL NEVER WALK AGAIN. GLEN DIDN'T, INSTEAD OF USING HIS BURNED LEGS AS AN EXCUSE FOR NOT DOING THINGS HE THOUGHT OF THEM AS SOMETHING THAT HE HAD TO GET OVER. HE SET A GOAL FOR HIMSELF, HIS FIRST GOAL WAS TO WALK AGAIN. AFTER MANY MONTHS OF PATIENT MOVING AND RUBBING HIS LEGS HE DID WALK. THEN HE SET A GOAL FOR RUNNING. AFTER HIS LEGS GOT USED TO WALKING, HE LEARNED HOW TO RUN. THEN HE WENT ON TO WIN MANY MEDALS. IF MORE PEOPLE WOULD BE LIKE HIM AND SO MANY OTHERS WHO HAVE OVERCOME THEIR HANDICAPS AND NOT LOOK ON THEIR HANDICAPS AS SOMETHING TO KEEP THEM FROM DOING THINGS BUT SOMETHING THEY HAD TO GET OVER, THEY COULD PROBABLY GET OVER IT. NOW, HE IS HELPING KIDS BY GIVING THEM A FREE HOME AND FOOD. I'M SURE THEY WILL GROW UP TO BE A BETTER PERSON THAN THEY WOULD HAVE IF HE HADN'T TAKEN THEM IN.

Besides being related to overall quality, length is also related to the appearance of errors in an essay; longer essays provide more opportunities for errors. A child who spells well, making one misspelling per page, for example, will probably misspell two words in a two-page paper, ten words in a ten page theme. On the other hand, errors also appear more frequently in essays written by children who do not have a good command of written language. But these children usually write briefer papers, reducing their opportunities for error. That is why the error counts made in the writing mechanics analyses sometimes showed that both higher and lower quality papers had few errors per paper: the higher essays because the writers were skilled, the lower essays because the papers were short.

One way to give meaning to the error counts, then, is to "shrink" the good papers and "inflate" the poor ones until they are the same size, and then make comparisons. In effect, this is what an error rate does. It determines the number of errors per hundred words, and allows us to make more direct comparisons between the two kinds of essays, regardless of the difference in their length. As the error rate tables at the end of this chapter demonstrate, the two groups were more dissimilar than error counts alone indicated: lower quality papers had high error rates and higher quality papers had low ones.

Paragraphing

The 13-year-old papers contained few paragraphing errors.[4] Even the poorly written papers were almost completely free of them (ninety-six percent of the essays had no paragraphing errors). And between ninety-seven and ninety-eight percent of the middle and highest quality papers were also free of these errors.

However, most of the lower papers (about eighty percent) consisted quite appropriately of only one paragraph. Passage 3-1 is typical in that it is poorly developed and leaves its generalizations unsupported.

Higher quality essays. The top group of papers contained about the same percentage of papers one paragraph in length--58 percent--as the middle group (see Passage 3-2 for a one-paragraph higher quality essay). But when writers of higher quality papers used more than one paragraph, they seemed to reveal a clearer understanding of the paragraph organizing role than did the middle quality writers. The author of the following essay, for instance, used each paragraph for the development of a single idea or theme:

Passage 3-3 (a complete essay)

> I ADMIRE ROBERT CLEMENTE OF THE BASEBALL PITTSBURGH PIRATES BECAUSE OF THE WAY HE HAD TO SURVIVE IN HIS LIFE.
>
> WHEN HE FIRST BECAME A BALLPLAYER WITH A DODGER FARMCLUB IN MONTREAL, THE MANAGER WOULDN'T LET HIM PLAY BECAUSE THERE WERE SCOUTS FOR OTHER TEAMS WHAT WOULD BUY BUY HIM IF THEY SAW HIM PLAY GOOD. ROBERTO WAS WAS SEEN HOWEVER BY A PITTSBURGH SCOUT AND HE WAS BOUGHT AT THE ANNUAL DRAFT FOR $4000 AFTER THE DODGERS HAD PAID $10,000 TO GET HIM. HE BECAME A STAR WITH THE PIRATES IN THE MIDDLE 1950'S BUT HE NEVER HIT MANY HOME RUNS.
>
> ROBERTO HAD MANY PROBLEMS PLAYING BASEBALL IN AMERICA. HE WAS A LATIN-AMERICAN AND SPOKE VERY LITTLE ENGLISH. HE ALSO HAD PROBLEMS BECAUSE HE WAS DARK-SKINNED AND HE HAD TO EAT AND SLEEP IN ALL BLACK PLACES.

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[4] Paragraphing errors are described in Appendix B.

ROBERTO ALSO HAD MANY INJURIES. HE HAD A BAD BACK, TORN LEG LIGAMENTS, SORE ARMS AND MANY OTHER INJURIES BUT HE OVERCAME THEM ALL. HE GOT RID OF HIS BAD BACK WHEN HE WENT INTO THE SERVICE FOR SIX MONTHS. USUALLY MEN COME OUT WITH BAD BACKS.

WHEN THE 1960'S CAME AROUND SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ROBERTO. HE WAS PERFECTLY OKAY, NO INJURIES, AND HE HELPED THE PRIATES TO THEIR FIRST PENNANT SINCE THE EARLY 1900'S. HE WON THE BATTING TITLE THAT YEAR BUT WAS VERY MAD BECAUSE HE WASN'T PICKED FOR THE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER AWARD. DICK GROAT HIS TEAMMATE WON IT. THE 1960'S MARKED THE START OF ROBERTO'S NEW FOUND HOME RUN POWER TOO. EVERY YEAR AFTER 1960 HE HIT IN THE DOUBLE COLUMNS IN HOME RUNS. HE WON 3 BATTING TITLES IN ALL THE 1960'S. IN THE WORLD SERIES OF 1960 THE PIRATES WON IT IN 7 GAMES. DICK MAZEROSKI THE SECOND BASEMAN HIT A HOME RUN TO WIN THE WORLD SERIES FOR THE PIRATES. THE PIRATES DIDN'T WIN ANOTHER PENNANT AGAIN IN THE 1960'S.

This careful structuring of homogenous paragraphs enhanced the clarity and readability of the paper.

The expert readers felt that while the paragraphing in the higher quality papers was nearly error free, it was also weak. Paragraphs were not well developed, and the ideas they contained tended to be superficial. In Passage 3-3, for example, the paragraphs are descriptive only. The child who wrote them didn't probe. He didn't ask, for instance, how Clemente might have felt about his injuries, or why he was so much better in the 1960's than in the 1950's. The judges felt that the single greatest weakness among higher quality papers was insufficient and incomplete paragraphing. The essays would have been much better, they suggested, if the children had been able to develop their ideas more thoroughly.

Middle quality essays. Middle quality papers were also predominantly (sixty-four percent) one paragraph in length. When multiple paragraphs appeared in these essays, they tended to indicate movement from one general thought to another.

Passage 3-4 (a complete essay)

I ADMIRE MY UNCLE. HIS NAME IS JOHN SMITH. LAST SUMMER HE BOUGHT A BICYCLE FOR ME AND MY

BROTHER. AND THIS SUMMER HE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL. MY MOTHER SAID HE WASN'T WELL. I WANTED TO SEE HIM BUT I COULDN'T. WHEN HE BECAME BETTER, HE WANTED TO SEE US. I WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE HIM. HE BROUGHT US CANDY ON THE WAY FROM THE HOSPITAL. HE SAID HE WAS HAPPY TO SEE US.

THIS YEAR MY BROTHER WANTS AOTHER BICYCLE. MY UNCLE WAID HE WILL BUY HIM ONE, BUT MY MOTHER SAID SHE WILL BUY HIM ONE FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR. BEFORE MY UNCLE WANT TO THE HOSPITAL HE SAID HE WOULD TAKE US FOR A RIDE IN HIS NEW CAR HE GOT, AND HE DID.

EVERY TIME WHEN MY UNCLE COMES OVER HE GIVES US CANDY OR PATATOE CHIP, BUT WHEN HE IS READY TO GO HOME HE ALWAYS GIVES US CHILDREN ONE DOLLAR.

MY UNCLE LIVED ON A FARM BY HIS SELF. HE HAD A BROTHER.

Now the ideas the student writer recorded are not spread throughout the paper; each paragraph contains a complete and distinct idea. Yet some paragraphs (e.g., the second paragraph) contain several unrelated ideas: the discussion of the bicycle and the discussion of the ride in the car. In other words, the child who wrote this essay had internalized one convention with regard to paragraphing--distinct ideas should not be spread over several paragraphs--but he had not internalized another: individual paragraphs should not contain unrelated ideas. And this student writer was typical of the middle group 13-year-olds who wrote multiple paragraphs.[5] These children appear to have an incomplete grasp of paragraphing.

Lower quality essays. When multiple paragraphs appeared in the poorest quality essays, each paragraph usually presented a new set of generalities--all unsupported. For example:

Passage 3-5 (a complete essay)

I THINK BILL COSBY IS AN AWFUL FUNNY MAN. BECAUSE HE WROTE MANY FINE JOKES. WE HAVE A FEW OF HIS RECORDS AND YOU CAN LISTEN TO THEM EACH LOTS OF TIMES AND YOU WILL PROBABLY LAUGH EACH TIME.

---

[5] An alternative interpretation might be that the second paragraph is internally consistent, since it discusses two modes of transportation. Then we might say the child who wrote the essay knew what he wanted to do (i.e., discuss related things in paragraph 2), but he simply didn't know how to relate the ideas to one another in a smoothly flowing manner.

HE IS GREAT IN HIS TELEVISION SHOWS. TO BAD THEY TOOK HIS SHOW "I SPY" OFF THE AIR. HIS NEW SHOWS ARE ALRIGHT BUT I LIKE SPY SHOWS.

LATERY HE HAS BEEN GETTING COMPETITION FROM OTHER NEGRO COMMEDIANS. BUT IF HE STAYS AS GOOD AS HE IS HE WILL ALWAYS BE THE BEST.

In summary, the bottom papers were written by children with an unclear notion of paragraphing--their paragraphs consisted of unsupported generalities which tended to be unrelated to one another. The middle group of papers was written by children who tended to paragraph well in that they developed single ideas within individual paragraphs. Regularly, though, they included diverse ideas in the same paragraph, indicating that they did not fully understand paragraphing. The paragraphs in the highest quality essays reflected a relatively complete mastery of paragraphing, though the single greatest flaw in these papers was their lack of development. Too often, the children who wrote the essays merely touched on ideas and neglected to pursue them as far as they could have.

Punctuation and Capitalization

In general, the essays were relatively free of punctuation errors: more than one-fourth of them contained fewer than one such error per hundred words, and slightly less than one-half of the papers had fewer than two such errors per hundred words.[6] As a rule, higher quality papers contained fewer punctuation errors per hundred words than did middle and lower quality essays, the latter two groups having roughly equal error rates. The kinds of errors appearing in higher papers, though, were decidedly different from those in lower quality papers.

Higher quality papers. In the higher quality papers, commas were the most heavily used punctuation mark: less than one percent of the children used none at all, and four out of every five papers containing one comma contained two or more. They were used in a variety of situations, as the following passages illustrate:

Passage 3-6 (between items in a series)

THIS WAS SHOWN WHEN SHE TOOK PLACE IN THE "BALCONY SCENE," THE FARWELL SCENE" AND THE "DEATH SCENE."

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[6] Errors are defined in Appendix B.

Passage 3-7 (for clarification)

WHEN TRUMAN DIED THE SLAVES THAT WERE LET TO FREEDOM, BY HER, WERE VERY PROUD OF HER.

Passage 3-8 (to set off a subordinate clause)

AS YOU ALREADY KNOW, SHE HAS MADE MANY HIT RECORDS.

Those who wrote the higher quality papers provided themselves with more opportunities to punctuate. Furthermore, their punctuation was consistently correct. While the lowest quality papers contained few punctuation marks (except commas), and middle quality papers showed inconsistent punctuation, the higher quality essays were punctuated in a consistently correct manner, in spite of the fact that the writers of these papers provided themselves with more opportunities to punctuate (correctly or incorrectly) than the others did. Examples of the kinds of constructions appearing in the higher quality essays are:

Passage 3-9 (appositive)

THE PERSON I ADMIRE IS BUBLA SMITH, DEFENSIVE END OF THE BALTIMORE COLTS.

Passage 3-10 (before a coordinating conjunction)

THERE AREN'T MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE PROUD OF RICHARD M NIXON, BUT THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO.

Passage 3-11 (setting off a subordinate clause)

HIS BROTHER ROBERT MAY HAVE BEEN TOO, IF HE WOULD HAVE LIVED.

The problems that appeared in the highest quality papers tended to be only indirectly related to punctuation, and they will be described later in this chapter. Certainly, the children who wrote these papers seldom used more sophisticated punctuation marks such as colons, semicolons, parentheses, and quotation marks. But then they provided themselves with few opportunities to use those marks. One has the feeling, after reading the higher quality essays, that these student authors could say what they wanted to say using only the one punctuation mark they had mastered so well--the comma.

Middle quality papers. The writers of middle quality essays knew that punctuation marks could be useful, though they did not always know when to use them--or which ones to use. As a result, passages like the following appeared:

Passage 3-12

HE MOVE'S LIKE LIGHTENING UNDER HIS FEET. HE'S VERY SHORT.

Passage 3-13

ONE DAY DON QUIJOTE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING NO OTHER MAN COULD, HE WANTED TO BE HIMSELF SET OUT TO FIND A DREAM A DREAM WHICH WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

In Passage 3-12, the child incorrectly put an apostrophe in the verb MOVE'S but correctly put an apostrophe in the contraction HE'S. In Passage 3-13, the student author correctly recognized that a punctuation mark was required between COULD and HE, though he didn't make the correct choice. The commas should have been used to set off A DREAM WHICH WAS IMPOSSIBLE. It would appear then, that these children were inconsistent in their use of punctuation, and even less aware of colons, semicolons, parentheses and quotation marks than were the authors of higher quality papers.

Lower quality papers. The experts reading the age 13 papers found that the lower quality papers had a few punctuation errors because the papers were brief and required little punctuation: most sentences tended to be simple declarative statements. Commas were all but absent; less than one percent of the lower quality papers contained question marks, one percent exclamation marks, less than one percent colons, four percent quotation marks, and less than a half of a percent parentheses.[7] No semicolons appeared in any lower quality papers. These low rates of appearance are not surprising, given the simple language and simple constructions in these papers (Passage 3-1 is pretty typical in that respect). The most complex constructions found in lower quality papers--and these appeared infrequently--were similar to the following:

Passage 3-14 (comma used to set off and emphasize a phrase)

BUT ONE DAY, ONE DAY ALL OF THIS WILL STOP.

---

[7] See the discussion of sentences for sentence-ending punctuation marks, page 20.

Passage 3-15 (commas used to separate items in a series)

I PICK HIM AS A BEST STAR BECAUSE HE CAN SING, DANCE, AND HE PLAYS IN A LOT OF SHOWS.

Roughly, the lowest scoring group of writers fell into two groups according to comma use (commas being the only nonsentence-ending punctuation mark used regularly). The first group, the non-users, accounted for slightly less than half of the students. The comma users differed from the non-users in that they tended to use commas frequently (almost two-thirds of those who used one comma used two or more), and with some notion of when and where those punctuation marks should appear. The notion may have been wrong--either wholly or in part--but it was a usable notion nevertheless.

There were occasions when punctuation marks were needed but absent (as when items in a series appeared without intervening commas) and some occasions when those marks were used incorrectly. The experts were unanimous in stating that the authors of the lower quality papers, as a group, had no perceptible understanding of the role of punctuation in written language.

Colons, semicolons, quotation marks, and parentheses appeared so irregularly that it is not possible to make generalizations about children who use them.

Capitalization

Capitalization errors followed the same pattern as run-on sentences: the rate of capitalization errors was greatest for poorly written essays and least for essays of the highest quality. At least one capitalization error appeared in three out of five poorly written essays, half of the middle quality essays, and two out of five higher quality essays. In the latter group, however, multiple errors appeared to be concentrated in a small percentage of the papers; only nine percent of those essays had two or more capitalization errors per hundred words.

In fact, the capitalization errors in the top group appeared to be oversights which might well have been caught in proofreading. For instance, it often happened that a sentence began with a lower case letter when all other sentences began with capitals, or an uncapitalized proper noun appeared with many other capitalized proper nouns. Clearly, these writers had no real problems deciding when to capitalize, they just overlooked a letter here and there.

The middle quality essays contained enough inconsistency in capitalization to cause the judges to wonder whether the children who wrote the essays had completely internalized the proper conventions. Inconsistencies like "Lincoln-mercury" appeared with regularity. The judges felt that the children who wrote middle group essays had some idea of when capitalization was required, but their notion was incomplete.

The lower quality essays, on the other hand, contained no clear pattern of capitalization. While they tended to capitalize the first letter of each sentence, they also capitalized many words that should not have been and neglected to capitalize words that should have been, like "british" or "negro." The judges felt that these children knew that some words should be capitalized, so they inserted capitals whenever they felt enough time had elapsed since the last time they had capitalized something.

Sentence Structure

The 13-year-old essays contained rather few run-on sentences and improperly used sentence fragments.[8] Over half of all essays contained no run-on sentences and one-fifth had only one; more than three out of every four essays had one or fewer run-ons. Similarly, about three-fourths of the essays contained no improperly used sentence fragments and less than one percent contained only one.

Since the writers were not specifically instructed to proofread their essays, these error rates may be misleading. It's possible that proofreading might have eliminated some of the errors and reduced the error rates accordingly.

When the number of run-on sentences and improperly used sentence fragments was tabulated for each quality group (higher, middle, and lower), two patterns emerged: First, improperly used sentence fragments appeared slightly more frequently in lower quality papers (over one-fourth of the papers had them) than in middle or higher papers (less than one-fifth and one-seventh, respectively). It is still apparent, though, that most children do not make sentence fragments errors, since seven out of ten low quality papers, and two-thirds of the middle and higher quality papers have no improper sentence fragments at all. Second, there is a marked decrease in the number of run-on sentences as one moves from lower to middle to higher quality papers. A

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8 The expression "improperly used sentence fragment" is preferable to "sentence fragment," since novelists, journalists and ad writers have established effective uses for fragments. See Appendix B for a description of run-on sentences and improperly used sentence fragments.

little less than two-thirds of the lower quality papers, over half of the middle quality papers, and over one-third of higher quality essays had one or more run-on sentences.[9]

Sentence fragments: Higher quality essays. These passages are from higher quality essays:

Passage 3-16

I THINK THE REASON RICHARD M NIXON WAS PICKED FROM THE ELECTION WAS BECAUSE HE RULED THE BIGGEST POPULATED STATES. FOR INSTANCE, CALIFORNIA, NEW YORK, AND QUITE A BIT OF THE OTHER LARGES STATES.

Passage 3-17

HE TRIED TO HELP EVERYBODY. PEOPLE OF ALL RACES.

These sentence fragments differed from those in the middle range papers in one important respect. They were clearly related to the sentences which preceded them, serving to qualify their meanings. Further, through a simple change of punctuation marks, the errors could have been easily removed.

Middle quality essays. Sentence fragments appearing in the middle range papers seemed to be afterthoughts. They were simply injected into the essay with no real connection to the preceding and following sentences. The second sentence in this passage is typical.

Passage 3-18

SHE IS DEAD NOW I THINK. BUT TO A LOT OF PEOPLE SHE WAS GOOD.

The passage came from an essay about Florence Nightingale, and both statements apply eminently well to her. Yet they appear incongruous when adjacent to one another.

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[9] It might have been interesting to compute the rate of sentence fragments and run-on sentences, e.g., run-ons per ten sentences, etc. These rates might show sentence problems more dramatically.

Lower quality essays. The sentence fragments in the lowest group of essays were reflections of spoken language; the children who wrote the essays set down strings of words natural in colloquial speech. For example, in describing Martin Luther King. Jr.'s achievements, one student said:

Passage 3-19

LETTING US DO AS THEY. SO MARTIL L KING WAS ALL RIGHT WITH ME.

In other words, the children who wrote the lower quality essays were writing as they spoke. And their spoken language was not based on complete sentences.[10]

In summary, sentence fragments in the top papers were related to and indeed qualified the sentences they followed. In the middle range papers, they often seemed afterthoughts, ideas casually mentioned in the essays and only loosely related to the general context. The sentence fragments in the lower quality essays tended to reflect the patterns of spoken, rather than written English.

Run-on sentences: Lower quality essays. The following passages contain examples of the kind of run-on sentences found in the lowest quality papers. As you read them, try to imagine what they would sound like if they were spoken.

Passage 3-20

I ADMIRE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR BECAUSE HE CAN MAKE A GOOD SPEECH AND HE ALL WAYS THINK OF THE NEGROS AND I DO NAT LIKE HIM ONLY BECAUSE HE THINK OF THE NEGROS I LIKE HIM BECAUSE HE THINK OF ALL THE PEPLE.

Passage 3-21

MY FATHER LOVES ME HELPS ME AND HE SAVE MY LIVE HE WORKS FOR ME AND HELP MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHER IN THERE LIVES AND HE LIKE THE PEOPLE I LIKE HE PAYS THE BILLS FOR MY MOTHER GOES SHOPE FOR US.

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[10] Spoken language, especially in informal settings, tends to make heavy use of sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and other constructions which would be unacceptable in formal, written English.

These sentences constitute very poorly written English; they contain a number of separate but complete thoughts in some unclear relation to one another. In Passage 3-21, for example, after reading about the love a father has for his child, we expect the remainder of the sentence to be related to that love--an amplification of what love means, for instance. Instead, we find a listing of reasons why the child believes his father loves him. The difficulty arises in the writer's failing to relate the reasons to one another in some clear, understandable manner.[11]

These new, unrelated thoughts bother the eye; we expect to see many reasons for the child's admiring his father, but not to see them all run together. Yet the same sentence that bothers the eye is considerably more acceptable to the ear. In speech, we often speak in sentences run together with few transitions and with a relatively unclear relationship of ideas.

Now these passages were taken from essays written by children who (the judges speculated) probably write by recording their spoken language. This is indicated by their failure to use punctuation (half the papers contained no punctuation at all) and their frequent use of sentence fragments (another commonly used kind of oral construction) and run-on sentences.

Middle quality essays. Similarly, run-on sentences appeared in the middle quality essays, though the logic which drew the many disparate thoughts together was not as unclear as it was in the lower quality papers. In the following passage from an essay about Jerry Lewis, notice that the thoughts strung together have an underlying logic; they provide information which may be used to understand why Jerry Lewis is a successful comedian.

Passage 3-22

> HIS CARREER IN BEING A STAR HAD BIENG VERY SUCCESSFUL HE PROPELY STARTED WHEN HE WAS SMALL AND SAID JOKES TO PEOPLE AND THEY PROBALLY LIKE IT I SUPOSED THATS HOW HE GOT IN THE BUSINESS.

Other ambiguities aside, the appearance of the underlying logic can also be seen in this passage about John F. Kennedy:

Passage 3-23

> I ADMIRE JOHN F KENNEDY BECOUSE HE WAS A NAVY HERO BECOUSE WHEN HIS BOAT WAS CUT IN HALF HE SWAM FOR DAYS TO REACH HELP AND HE CARRIED A MAN WITH HIM WHO HAD BEEN HURT IN HIS TEETH.

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[11] It would seem that the child is not suffering from a lack of ideas, but rather a lack of knowledge about how to relate the ideas to one another.

The writer of passage 3-23 described reasons why Kennedy might have been considered a naval hero. It seems that the children who wrote middle quality essays had some notion that ideas in a sentence have to be logically related to each other in some particular manner. Perhaps they need instruction in ways to interrelate their thoughts, ways to qualify or expand upon important ideas by making some of them subordinate to others. In some sense, the problem here is like the one encountered with these children in their handling of sentence fragments--they are having organizational difficulty.

Higher quality essays. The run-on sentences in the higher quality essays were less frequent but similar in nature to those in the middle quality papers in that they seemed to be a result of subordination problems: the student authors had failed to indicate which ideas were central and which merely amplified or clarified the main idea.

Sentence types: Higher quality essays. While the three groups of essays appear similar in terms of their mean sentence lengths (the typical mean sentence length for all groups was between 14 and 17 words per sentence), this similarity is strictly superficial. Typically, the mean sentence length for the lowest quality essays was inflated by the appearance of run-on sentences similar to those in Passages 3-20 and 3-21. In the highest quality essays, run-on sentences appeared rarely, being replaced by sentences which were usually correct and occasionally complex. The following passage contains such sentences:

Passage 3-24

> DAN GURNEY HAS DRIVEN IN MANY RACES AND COMPE TITIONS. HE HAS DRIVEN FUEL INJECTED, GAS, AND "BLOWN" ENGINE DRAGSTERS. DAN HAS DRIVEN "FUNNY CARS" WITH THESE QUALIFICATIONS ALSO. HE HAS DRIVEN STOCK, MODIFIED AND SUPER-MODIFIED AT "DRAGWAYS" INCLUDING "CECIL COUNTY DRAG-OWAY" AS HAVE MANY OTHERS. MR GURNEY HAS DRIVEN AT INDIANAPOLIS, DAYTONA MIAMI, AND ALL OVER THIS COUNTRY AND ABROAD ALSO. HE HAS DONE STUNTS LIKE FLIPPING HIS CAR, RIDING ON 2 WHEELS INSTEAD OF 4. HE HAS CRASHED THROUGH WALLS OF FLAME AND JUMPED OVER JUNK CARS. HE HAS DONE ALMOST EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE ON FOUR WHEELS.

Passage 3-24 is typical of the higher quality essays, not only in terms of its average sentence length, but also in terms of its exclusive reliance upon declarative sentences. Only four percent of the essays employed questions and only four percent used exclamatory statements. The questions were all rhetorical in nature, as:

Passage 3-25

WHY DOES IT SEEM THAT EVERYONE'S AGAINST THEM?

Passage 3-26

IN OUR CULTURE IT IS PROPER OR ACCEPTABLE TO GO TO CHURCH BUT WHAT GOOD IS GOING TO CHURCH IF YOU DON'T LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE OR YOU ARE NOT AS REVERANT AS YOU SHOULD BE?

Middle quality essays. Similarly, middle quality essays are composed predominantly of declarative sentences. Again, only four percent of the essays contained questions, while seven percent employed exclamatory statements. The questions played the same rhetorical roles they played in the higher quality papers:

Passage 3-27

DON'T YOU THINK YOU COULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

Passage 3-28

HE WOULDN'T, WOULD HE? NO. OF COURSE NOT.

The exclamatory statements in the middle papers were intended either to increase emphasis, or to express strong emotion. Examples of the latter group are:

Passage 3-29

"HE'S THE GREATEST"!

Passage 3-30

IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL!

The exclamatory statements were sometimes improperly used to increase emphasis when periods would have served better. For example, the last sentence in one essay was:

Passage 3-31

THIS IS PART OF THE REASON I ADMIRE NEIL ARMSTRONG!

The child who wrote the essay was probably trying to close his paper emphatically, and what better way than with an exclamation point! Yet the misuse is an encouraging sign, for it reflects a consciousness of the need for emphasis at certain points in the essay.

Some other examples of mistaken attempts to use exclamation points for emphasis are:

Passage 3-32

HE HAD SOME GOOD SONGS ON RECOIGS LIKE FOLSOM PRISON BLUES AND THE BOY NAMED SUE!

Passage 3-33

RIGHT NOW LEROY IS 8TH MAN IN RUSHING HE HAS COME BACK GREATLY!

Lower quality essays. Questions and exclamatory statements were practically nonexistent in the lowest quality papers. Less than one percent of those essays contained questions and less than two percent contained exclamatory statements. This is not surprising since language for these children is primarily oral, and they do not know how to change their spoken English into acceptable written English.

Awkward Constructions

Awkward constructions[12] appeared less frequently than punctuation errors, all groups typically having fewer than three per hundred words. Higher quality papers usually had fewer than two per paper, while middle and lower quality papers had about two and less than three, respectively.

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[12] See Appendix B for a description of awkward constructions.

Higher quality essays. Awkwardness appeared irregularly in higher quality papers, and when it did, it was likely due to oversight. The reasons for the awkwardness varied from paper to paper. Sometimes it was an incorrectly used preposition, sometimes it was due to an omitted word, but in any event, it was never particularly systematic.

Middle quality essays. Awkwardness due to the omission of words and phrases appeared less often in middle quality papers than in the lower quality ones. However, awkwardness due to inappropriate wording did appear regularly. An example can be found in a paper about Winston Churchill, who served to HELP TO COURAGE THE PEOPLE THAT THEY HAD NOT LOST THE WAR. The child didn't quite know the meaning of the word COURAGE, or he didn't quite know the word he wished to use.

Lower quality essays. Awkward constructions in lower quality papers often contained nonsensical phrases. The children who wrote them may have known what they wanted to say, but they had some difficulty expressing themselves. One child, in describing his memories of Martin Luther King, Jr., said he would remember King FROM THE DAY I DIE TO THE DAY I LIVE.

Other awkward constructions were due to the usual omission of words or phrases. While these cases appeared throughout the papers, omissions in the opening sentences may have been due to the children's assuming that we (the readers of the papers) were already familiar with the background for the papers. The child who started his paper with JOE NAMETH BECOUSE OF HIS WAY IN FOOTBALL assumed that we knew he (the child) was supposed to pick someone he admired and tell what there was to admire about him.

Finally, awkwardness often appeared through the use of an inappropriate preposition. One child, for example, said Winston Churchill was famous because of WHAT HE DID TO ALL THE PEOPLE.

Agreement

Agreement errors[13] appeared regularly in the lowest quality papers, where six out of every seven papers had at least one agreement error per hundred words, and only fourteen percent were totally free of them. The middle group of papers was much better off: slightly less than one-third of them had no agreement errors, while four-fifths had one or fewer per hundred words. Ninety-one percent of the higher quality papers had one or fewer agreement errors per hundred words.

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[13] See Appendix B for a description of agreement errors.

Higher quality essays. The errors found in higher quality papers were very different from those in the bottom and middle group essays, for when they did occur (which was seldom), they occurred in ambitious constructions. These were the kinds of errors the judges wished to applaud, since they indicated that the students were attempting to extend their expressive range. The appropriate response to these errors should be a pat on the student's back along with an explanation of the problem and how to correct it.

Problems of this variety included the handling of tense sequences, such as:

Passage 3-34

AFTER HIS ACCEPTANCE, WHILE PLAYING IN COLLEGE, HE IS ONE OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS.

Passage 3-35 (WOULD BE should have been were)

HE WOULD HAVE TO FIGHT FOR HIS LIFE IF HE WOULD BE CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY.

Middle quality essays. Papers at the middle range of quality, like the higher papers, tended to have fewer errors. The kinds of agreement problems appearing at the middle level of performance involved fairly sophisticated situations such as the subjunctive mood:

Passage 3-36

IF SHE WAS . . .

They also occurred when singular nouns were followed by prepositional phrases involving plurals.[14]

Passage 3-37

A GROUP OF GIRLS WERE GOING . . .

It is worth pointing out that children who made the latter kind of error seemed to understand that plural verbs accompany plural nouns.

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[14] This is a moot point: some experts find A GROUP OF GIRLS WERE GOING to be an acceptable construction, others do not.

Lower quality essays. The agreement problems the experts found in the lower quality papers were characterized as errors caused by the children's attempts to record the dialects they spoke. These errors appeared as omitted final consonants (such as s's, t's, and d's), neglected verb endings, and some pronoun substitutions characteristic of certain dialects:

Passage 3-38

HE DON'T HAVE STRENGTH IN HE LEG.

Passage 3-39

HE WAS KILL.

Notice that information in each sentence was communicated clearly without the redundancy required by convention.

In short, writers of higher quality essays understood the basic conventions regarding agreement. The middle group essays were written by children with a considerable but incomplete ability to make things agree, and the poorest essays, once again, suggested that the children who wrote them were trying to record spoken language.

Spelling and Word Usage

Errors[15] involving words appeared with considerable regularity. These errors--both incorrect word choice and misspellings--appeared in seventy-nine percent and seventy-eight percent of the papers, respectively. In other words, only one out of five papers had no word choice errors, only one out of five papers had no misspellings.

Now the preceding paragraph does not mean that the children who misspelled regularly were the same children who regularly chose the wrong words. The relationship which seems to exist between misspelling and word choice indicates only that papers containing no misspellings probably contained no (or very few) word choice errors.

Word Counts:

The number of different words in the papers at each level of quality was limited by the total number of words the children had written. As is to be

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[15] See Appendix B for a description of word choice errors and misspellings.

expected, children who wrote the most used the greatest number of different words. The typical lower quality paper, for example, used between seventy-two and seventy-four different words in a 128- to 136-word essay.

Middle quality essays usually presented 104 to 106 different words in a 200- to 204-word paper, higher quality essays had 118 to 120 different words in essays of 224-228 words in length. When the number of different words per hundred words of essay was computed, the rate was about the same for all groups--about fifty-three to fifty-six different words per hundred words of essay.

The computer measurement of vocabulary range and appropriateness of word choice revealed that the variety of words increased as the quality of the essays increased. In the lowest essays, for example, there are large numbers of function words such as of, for, is, was, a, and the, but there are relatively few words serving other purposes. Moving to the higher quality essays, function words accounted for a smaller proportion of the vocabulary, with other words becoming more common.

At the higher level, though, certain kinds of words the judges expected to see did not appear. When they looked for adjectives and adverbs which were especially specific and meaningful, the judges found instead such bland words as great, very, beautiful, and the like. They speculated that the children turned to these stock words and phrases because their ability to perceive things distinctively was not yet mature and they had to rely heavily on other people's perceptions.

Homonyms:[16]

Certain groups of homonyms cause problems. To, too, and two, for example, are often interchanged, as are then and than, it's and its, and there, their, and they're. Figures 3-3 through 3-6 show the extent to which these words were confused at each quality level.

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[16] See note page 28.

Figure 3-3: How 13-year-olds used to, too, and two in essays for the famous person exercise. The length of the bar is proportioned to the number of times the homonym was used.

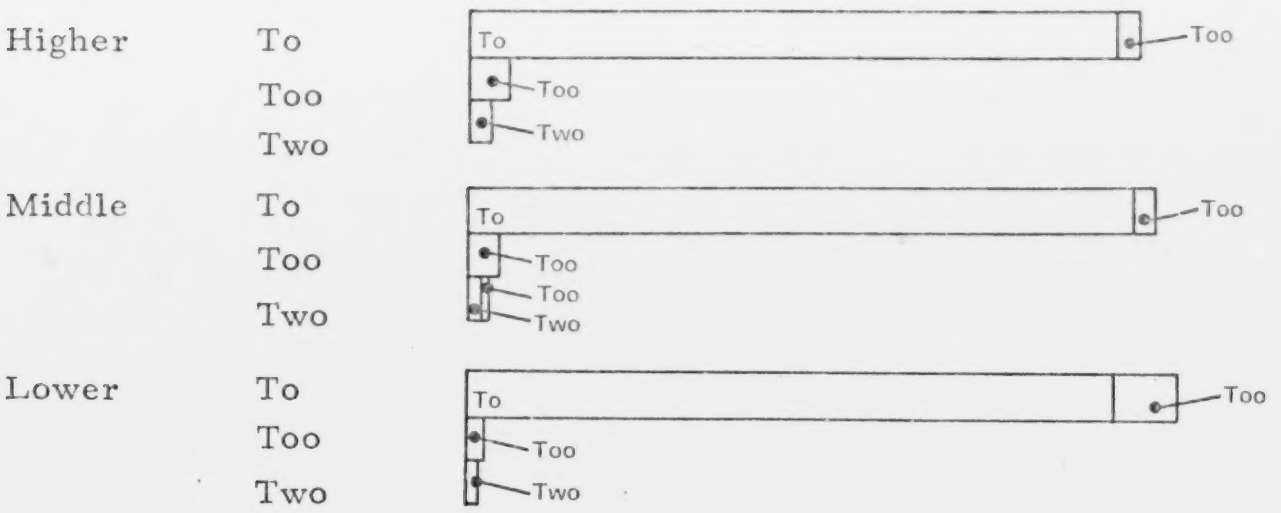


Figure 3-4: How 13-year-olds used than and then in essays for the famous person exercise. The length of the bar is proportioned to the number of times the homonym was used.

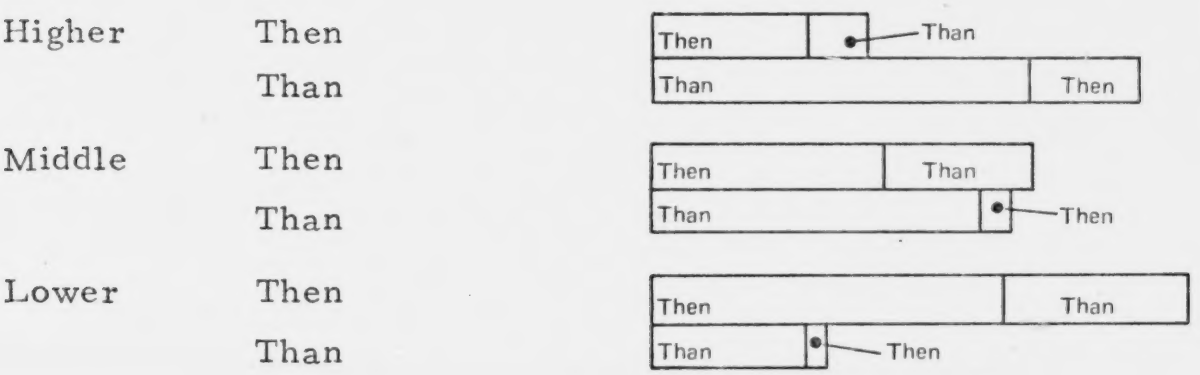


Figure 3-5: How 13-year-olds used it's and its in essays for the famous person exercise. The length of the bar is proportioned to the number of times the homonym was used.

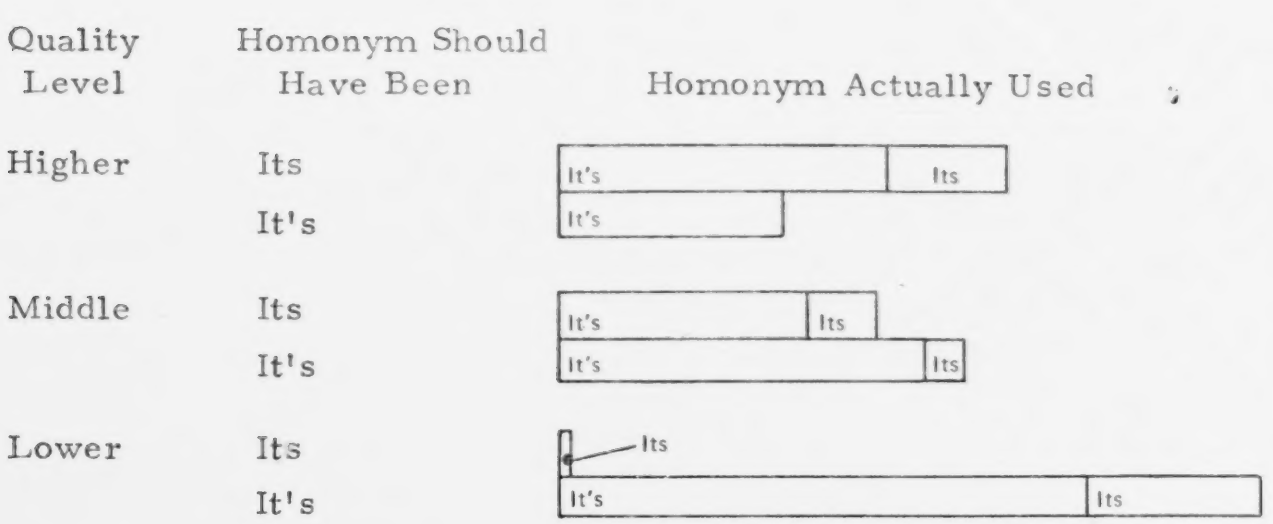
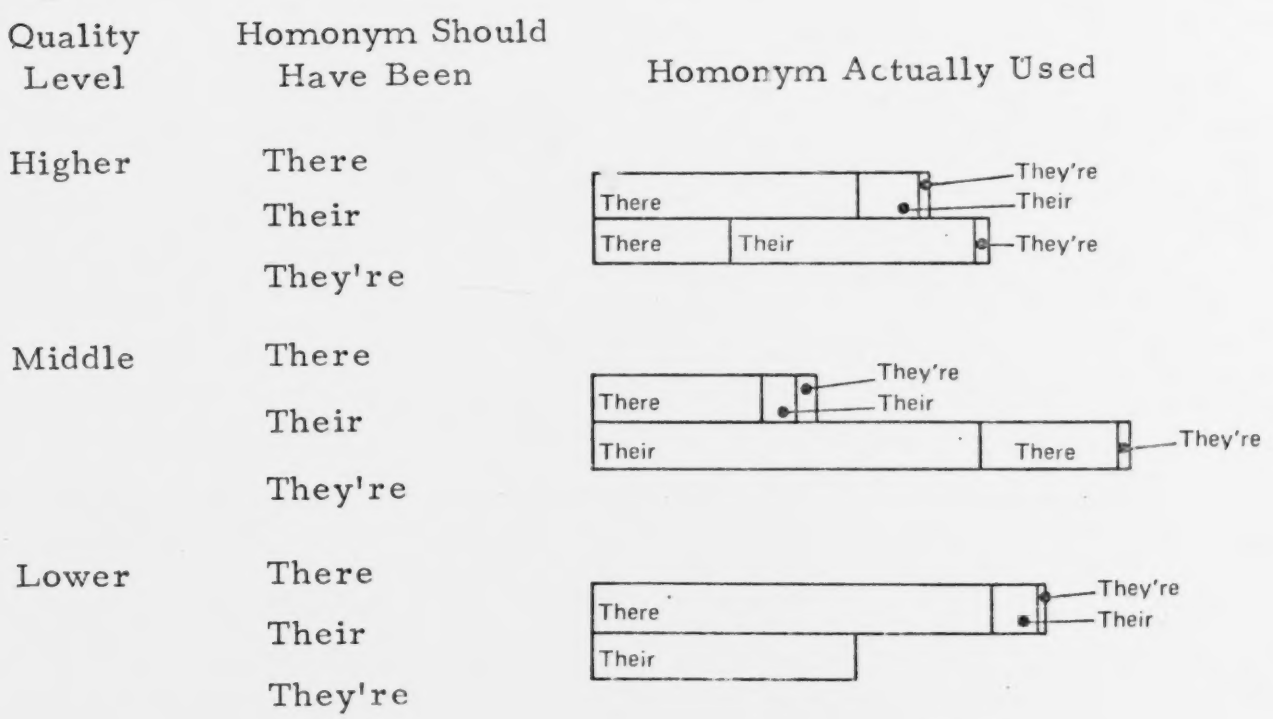


Figure 3-6: How 13-year-olds used there, their, and they're in essays for the famous person exercise. The length of the bar is proportioned to the number of times the homonym was used.



As it turned out, to, too, and two presented no real difficulties for 13-year-olds. There was some confusion in using too for to, but it was minimal. Also, some children who wrote middle quality essays used too when two would have been appropriate.

Then and than caused only slightly more difficulty, though the problems were more apparent in the lowest two quality groups. The problem here generally involves using than in place of then. In other words, children correctly used than for comparative statements, and it is the temporal homonym which causes difficulties.

It's was not a real problem; the children seemed to know that contractions require apostrophes. But its, the possessive, was misused roughly three times as often as it was used correctly. The misuse was probably caused by a confusion between possessives requiring apostrophes, and possessive pronouns such as its, his, hers, yours, etc.

There, their, and they're caused problems about as often as its, though the problems amounted largely to confusion between their and there. Interestingly enough, there were no occasions when they're was called for, and its appearances in the essays were all incorrect; either there or their should have been used.

Spelling: Higher quality essays. The judges felt that misspellings in the top group of papers were more a result of carelessness than not knowing how a word was to be spelled. Often a word might be misspelled while it appeared correctly elsewhere in the same paper. Some children did have systematic difficulties with double s's, as in business, and in that repect they resembled the writers of middle quality papers.

None of the higher quality papers contained more than one misspelling of a common word per hundred words of essay, and sixty-nine percent of the higher essays contained fewer than one misspelling of uncommon words per hundred. This represents a slight increase over the spelling of the next lowest group of essays. Finally, eighty-eight percent of the top quality papers contained fewer than one misspelling of proper nouns per hundred words, and sixty-eight percent had no such misspellings at all.

Middle quality essays. Spelling errors in the middle quality papers struck the judges as being qualitatively different from the misspellings in the lower group. The judges reported that the children had some idea of which letters to use and really attempted to put them in the proper order, so in this respect their errors were not as agonizing as those in the lower group of papers. But

the authors of middle group papers did have difficulty determining when to double consonants and when not to (e.g., QUALLITY and CHILY), they occasionally transposed letters (as in TIERD for tired and SIAD for said), and they sometimes resorted to phonetic spellings such as WOROLD for world, TUFF for tough, DUM for dumb, and the like.

In general, these papers contained fewer misspellings than did the lower papers, and they had fewer misspellings of common words (only four percent of the papers had more than one such error per hundred words) and proper nouns (three out of five papers had no misspellings of names). Seventy-eight percent of the essays, however, contained misspellings of uncommon words, only a slight improvement over the lowest papers.

Lower quality essays. Papers at the lower level of quality contained several kinds of misspellings. First, the children who wrote the essays often transposed letters. Girls, for example, was written as GRILS in one paper, MINTUMEN for minutemen in another. Second, words were often run together, much as they are in spoken English. ALOT, instead of a lot, appeared regularly, for example. Third, words were often broken up--A NUTHER was used instead of another. Fourth, vowels caused trouble, especially in words where two vowels appeared together such as ai or ea. And the letter i appeared much more often than it should have, as in NAMITH, the quarterback for the New York Jets, and NIGRO[17]. Fifth, silent letters, such as gh and wr caused difficulties. Often the children hypercorrected, using silent letters when these were not required. They knew that silent letters appeared in certain words so they used them in related words: e.g., wrote appeared as WROUGHT. Terminal consonants also caused problems in cases where the consonants are not clearly pronounced. Paul Revere, for example, was alternately described as a silver SMIF or SMIFT, the terminal th being altered.

Common words tended to be misspelled infrequently--only thirteen percent of the essays contained one misspelling of a common word for each hundred words of essay. But as one might expect, uncommon words were often misspelled: eighty-seven percent of the essays had at least one misspelling of an uncommon word per hundred words of essays. The most commonly misspelled words were proper nouns, for forty-five percent of these essays contained at least one. One essay, for example, was about ALVIS PRESLE, a star who once made a movie in the Mexican city of ALKAPOKO. Another essay described a ride by PAUL REVIER from LEXENT to CONCONE to warn of a British invasion.

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[17] The extraneous i's make sense if the spelling is phonetic, a transcript of the way children speak. And adjacent pairs of vowels probably cause trouble because each pair sounds like only one letter in spoken language.

In conclusion, we find in spelling and word usage the same pattern that appears in sentence structure, punctuation, and the other areas. The lowest quality essays indicate that the children who wrote them are not aware of the differences between written and spoken language, and their writings are simply attempts to record the things they say. Specifically, the vocabulary is restricted, word choice reflects a vagueness acceptable in informal speech, and the spelling is phonetic. Middle group essays reflect an incomplete understanding of written language. The vocabulary is less constrained, the spelling is less phonetic and more consistent, and the choice of words is more accurate, if bland. The highest quality essays once again reflect a reasonable mastery of the conventions of written language. The vocabulary is a bit more wide-ranging than that of the middle group of papers, the only word choice errors are to be applauded (since they indicated a willingness to try new words), homonym problems are all but gone, and the spelling problems are at a minimum.

Summary

It would seem then, that the higher, middle, and lower 13-year-olds' papers are distinctly different. The bottom group of essays were likely written by children who, not knowing the conventions of written language, simply recorded their speech when they were asked to write. The middle group of children wrote papers indicating an incomplete internalization of the conventions of written language. The essays they wrote avoided many of the problems found in the lowest quality papers, but not consistently. The top essays were written by children who had internalized the conventions pretty consistently. Though they write correctly, these students seldom develop their ideas as fully as they might. While the lower two groups might profit from instruction on punctuation and the like (e.g., learning about what commonly employed punctuation marks might be used for), the top children might profit from instruction that would show them how to develop ideas more fully and relate them more successfully to one another. This kind of instruction would consider punctuation issues, of course, but as a means for achieving better development of ideas.

Table 3-1 - Statistics for the Age 13 famous person exercise papers.

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Paragraphing	Error Counts	Number of Paragraphing Errors	High	+ *	+ *	98	2	0	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	97	2	0	0
			Low	.1 *	.1 *	95	3	1	1
	Computer Analysis	Number of Paragraphs	High	.9	2.2	0	58	10	10
			Middle	.8	2.0	0	64	11	10
			Low	.9	1.6	0	78	12	5
		Mean Paragraph Length	High	**	10.1	Q_1 = 4.5		Q_3 = 16.2	
			Middle	**	9.4		4.6		14.0
			Low	**	6.4		4.2		8.8
Punctuation	Error Counts	Punctuation Errors	High	2.2	4.1	9	11	15	14
			Middle	2.9	4.8	18	9	11	16
			Low	3.5	4.4	7	17	9	13
	Computer Analysis	Number of Commas	High	2.0	4.8	11	12	11	11
			Middle	1.3	2.9	24	15	15	14
			Low	.9	1.3	49	20	9	8
		Number of Colons	High	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Middle	+ *	.1 *	96	2	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	99	0	0	1

* Single stars indicate arithmetic means, otherwise they are trimeans (see Tukey, J., Exploratory Data Analysis, Limited Preliminary Edition, Addison-Wesley, 1970, p. 2-25).

** Double stars indicate values not reported because of inapplicability.

\+ A plus sign indicates a value greater than .00 and less than .05.

When much variability appears in the data, quartile values are reported: Q_1 is the 25th centile, Q_3 is the 75th centile.

Table 3-1 - continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Punctuation cont'd	Computer Analysis	Number of Semicolons	High	+ *	.1 *	94	6	0	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	97	2	1	0
			Low	0	0	100	0	0	0
		Number of Quotation Marks	High	.2 *	.5 *	82	0	12	0
			Middle	.2 *	.5 *	87	1	9	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	96	0	3	0
		Number of Parentheses	High	+ *	.1 *	91	6	2	1
			Middle	+ *	.1 *	90	9	1	0
			Low	0	0	100	0	0	0
Capitalization	Error Counts	Number of Capitalization Errors	High	.8	1.2	58	20	10	4
			Middle	1.1	1.5	51	19	10	8
			Low	1.7	2.1	34	30	13	7
Sentence Structure	Error Counts	Sentence Fragments	High	.6	.8	68	26	3	2
			Middle	.6	.9	68	24	5	2
			Low	.8	.8	70	21	5	4
		Run-on Sentences	High	.6	.9	63	27	6	3
			Middle	1.2	1.4	46	29	11	5
			Low	1.7	2.2	37	22	13	3
	Computer Analysis	Number of Declarative Sentences	High	6.5	14.9	Q_1 = 11.4		Q_3 = 18.4	
			Middle	6.7	12.9	9.7		16.3	
			Low	6.2	7.7	5.6		10.7	

Table 3-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Sentence Structure cont'd	Computer Analysis	Number of Interrogative Sentences	High	+ *	.1 *	96	3	0	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	96	4	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
		Number of Imperative Sentences	High	+ *	.1 *	96	3	1	0
			Middle	+ *	.1 *	93	6	1	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	98	2	0	0
		Mean Sentence Length	High	**	15.7	Q_1 = 15.6		Q_3 = 18.9	
			Middle	**	15.2	12.4		18.3	
			Low	**	16.4	11.5		20.9	
		S.D. Sentence Length	High	**	6.8	Q_1 = 5.1		Q_3 = 8.9	
			Middle	**	7.1	5.3		9.1	
			Low	**	7.7	4.2		11.7	
	Error Counts	Awkward Constructions	High	1.1	2.0	28	33	14	12
			Middle	1.5	2.3	23	23	20	16
			Low	2.5	3.2	13	14	30	8
Agreement	Error Counts	Number of Agreement Errors	High	.9	1.7	33	31	19	8
			Middle	1.3	2.0	29	30	16	11
			Low	2.4	3.1	14	26	21	11
Spelling and Word Usage	Error Counts	Misspellings	High	2.3	4.4	Q_1 = 9		Q_3 = 2	
			Middle	3.5	6.0	11		2	
			Low	5.8	7.5	16		2	
		Word Choice Errors	High	1.5	2.6	Q_1 = 5		Q_3 = 1	
			Middle	1.8	2.9	5		1	
			Low	3.1	4.4	9		1	
	Computer Analysis	Misspellings of Common Words	High	+ *	.1 *	92	8	0	0
			Middle	+ *	.2 *	85	11	1	2
			Low	+ *	.3 *	71	19	1	3

Table 3-1 - continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Spelling and Word Usage cont'd	Computer Analysis	Misspellings of Uncommon Words	High	2.0	4.0	$Q_1 = 2$		$Q_3 = 6$	
			Middle	2.8	5.3	3		8	
			Low	3.9	5.8	3		10	
		Misspellings of Proper Nouns	High	.4	.8	68	14	8	6
			Middle	.6	1.0	60	19	13	4
			Low	.8	1.1	55	19	13	8
		Mean Word Length	High	**	4.0	$Q_1 = 3.9$		$Q_3 = 4.2$	
			Middle	**	4.0	3.8		4.1	
			Low	**	3.8	3.7		4.0	
		S.D. Word Length	High	**	2.0	$Q_1 = 1.9$		$Q_3 = 2.2$	
			Middle	**	1.9	1.8		2.1	
			Low	**	1.8	1.7		2.0	
		Total Number of Words	High	**	225.6	$Q_1 = 198$		$Q_3 = 251$	
			Middle	**	196.5	157		226	
			Low	**	131.7	93		174	
		Number of Different Words	High	53.3	119.0	$Q_1 = 104$		$Q_3 = 133$	
			Middle	54.0	103.8	89		118	
			Low	55.1	71.4	55		87	

CHAPTER IV

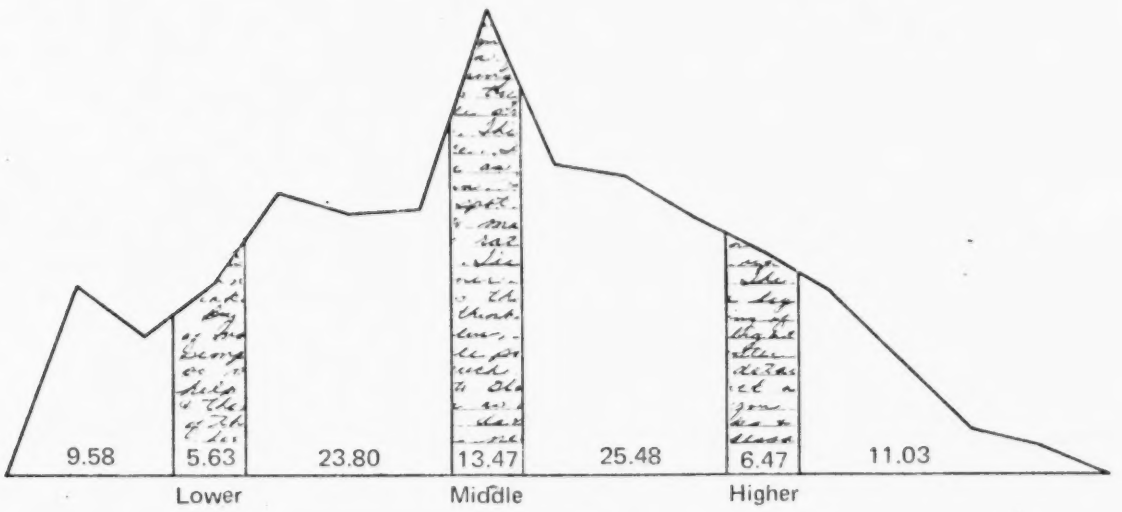
Age 17: The Famous Person Exercise

Introduction

The essays we will be discussing were written by teenagers near the end of their secondary schooling. In a sense, (taking into consideration the limitations of the data collection), these essays tell us about the end product of 11 or 12 years of education and 17 years of growth and experience.

While all the famous person essays written by 17-year-olds were used in the overall quality and error counts analyses, only three groups of the papers were used in the characterization and computer analyses.[1]

Figure 4-1: Distribution of papers for the 17-year-old famous person essays. The higher, middle, and lower quality points are indicated along with the percentage of papers selected for characterization and computer analysis of each level. 4.5% of the respondents wrote nothing at all.[2]



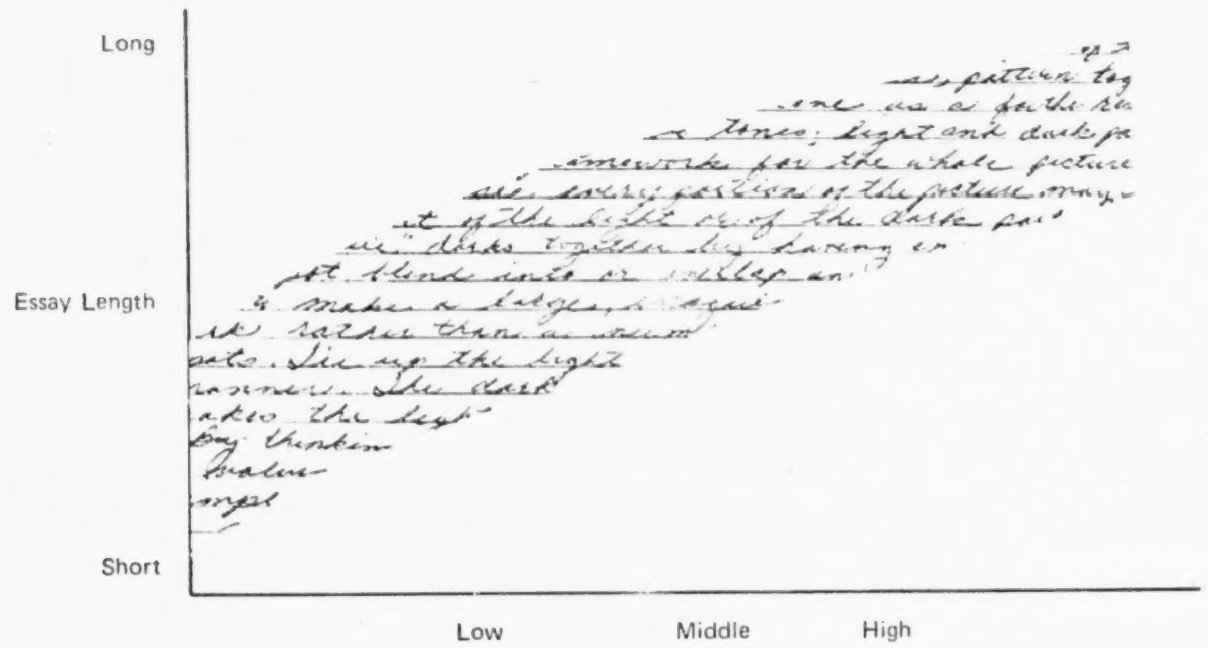
[1] See Table 1-1, Chapter 1, for an overview of the four analyses performed on these essays, and page 7 for a description of group selection.

[2] See Appendix E for a complete description of the distribution, and Appendix F for examples of 17-year-old papers which received the highest overall quality scores.

Essay Length

Not surprisingly, the higher quality 17-year-old essays were usually the longest and the lower quality were generally the shortest. This situation, shown in Figure 4-2, probably arose because the simple, unsupported generalities present in the lower quality papers required relatively few words to state, while the more specific ideas in the higher quality essays required much more space for their expression and development.[4]

Figure 4-2: Essay quality and essay length in the 17-year-old famous person essays.



Here is an example of a lower quality essay. Notice that it is both short and limited to undeveloped general statements.

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[4] See related note, page 39.

Passage 4-1 (an entire essay)

> I THINK THAT MICKEY MANTLE IS A GREAT MAN BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY TO PLAY BASEBALL. THE SPEAD HE HAS IS TROMENDOUS BECAUSE IT TAKE GREAT SPEAD TO PLAY BASEBALL. YOU HAVE TO BEABLE TO BAT REAL GOOD, TO BEABLE TO RUN FAST, & TO THROUGH STRATE & HE CAN DO ALL OF THESE THINGS.

The generalizations in the lower quality essays were often presented as thesis statements ("I THINK THAT MICKEY MANTLE IS A GREAT MAN BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY TO PLAY BASEBALL.") which were in turn supported by several unexamined assertions (e.g. "YOU HAVE TO BEABLE TO BAT REAL GOOD . . ."). It might be possible for us to accept the statement about Mantle's batting ability if the writer had told us his lifetime average, for example, or the number of times he held the American League batting championship. But this teenager, like so many of the other writers, did not provide the information we would need to either accept or reject his assertions. We simply cannot discover why he believes what he writes.

Now compare the essay length and depth of ideas in the lower quality essay with the length and depth of ideas in a paper representative of the higher quality papers:

Passage 4-2 (an entire essay)

> MY UNCLE, JOHN SMITH IS A PERSON WHOM I ADMIRE VERY MUCH. HE IS MY MOTHER'S SISTER'S HUSBAND. HE AND AUNT GWEN ARE MISSIONARIES IN WEST IRIAN.
>
> I THINK THE THING I ADMIRE MOST ABOUT HIM IS HIS COURAGE. ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO, TWO OTHER MISSIONARIES WHM HE KNEW WELL WERE ATTACKED AND EATEN BY CANNIBALS. THIS TRIBE LIVED NOT VERY FAR FROM WHERE UNCLE JOHN AND AUNT GWEN WERE STATIONED. SINCE UNCLE JOHN IS ONE OF THE BEST PILOTS THEY HAVE IN INDONESIA HE FLEW THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN AND OUT OF THE CANYON WHERE THE CANNIBALS LIVE. THERE IS NO RUNWAY AND HE HAD TO LAND ON A HILL ENDING IN A CHASM.

> I THINK MAINLY WHY I ADMIRE HIM IS BECAUSE OF HIS COURAGE. I WOULD HAVE BEEN PETRIFIED IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT AND PROBABLY WOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG AND BROUGHT THE WHOLE TRIBE DOWN ON THE PARTY. HE HAD TO HAVE A LOT OF ENDURANCE, TOO, TO FLY IN AND OUT OF THAT CANYON SO MANY TIMES.
>
> THAT IS WHY I ADMIRE HIM, BESIDES, I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYONE ELSE.

Even in the absence of alternative people to write about, the teenager who wrote this essay was able to say something specific about his reasons for admiring John Smith. He told us why he felt his uncle had endurance and was courageous (e.g., flying into a canyon with no landing strip). Certainly, the writer used unsupported generalizations (. . . UNCLE JOHN IS ONE OF THE BEST PILOTS THEY HAVE IN INDONESIA . . .), but they were by way of information rather than in direct support of a proposition--in this case, the idea that Mr. Smith was courageous. We can, in other words, understand why the writer felt Mr. Smith worthy of admiration. And what's more, we have the kind of concrete information we need to be able to agree or disagree.

But also notice that the essay was longer than the papers characteristic of lower quality essays. This increase in length was necessitated by the amount of concrete support the writer marshalled for his assertations.

There are many other attributes of writing that are also reflected in the length of an essay. Any writer, for instance, may make more errors in longer papers than in shorter ones simply because he has written more. Consequently, error rates (number of errors per hundred words) were computed in order to make direct comparisons between papers more reasonable. These error rates are included in the following discussions along with the raw error counts (i.e., total errors per paper).

Paragraphing

Over ninety-six percent of all the 17-year-olds were credited with no paragraphing errors, and another three percent had only one.[5] All quality levels--higher, middle, and lower--had about the same number of errors.

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[5] See Appendix B for a description of paragraphing errors.

Higher quality papers. While there were few errors, the judges said it was not true that the paragraphing in these essays was highly developed. Indeed, they said that paragraphing--especially as it reflects development of ideas--was the weakest aspect of the higher quality essays. The judges speculated that the teenagers who wrote these papers developed their ideas by a process of free association, sliding from one idea (represented most often by some key word) to another idea. The essays had an almost "stream-of-consciousness" quality to them, and it was easy to see how the writers moved from one idea to the next. Yet they tended to lack an overall unification. The judges believed the difficulty lay in the teenagers' thinking their essays out as they wrote them rather than planning them out beforehand. They suggested that these writers didn't really understand that a paragraph is a part of a larger whole, or that even though paragraphs do not have to follow a particular format, they still have to be related to the rest of the essay.[6]

Consider the essay in Passage 4-2. The paragraphs are not well developed, though they are basically sound. But what's more, they are not neatly interrelated to one another. For example, the middle two paragraphs deal with courage. Had they been written to deal with fortitude, or steadfastness, or some other admirable quality, they could replace the courage paragraphs with no loss to the essay, assuming the paragraphs were basically sound. The point is this: the paragraphs contained in the sample essay are not sufficiently interrelated to make them irreplaceable.

Forty-eight percent of the papers were one paragraph in length, and another eighteen percent were two paragraphs long. Only one-third of the papers were three or more paragraphs in length.

Middle quality papers. There tended to be less paragraphing in the middle quality papers than in the higher quality ones. Sixty-two percent of these papers were one paragraph in length, eighteen percent were two paragraphs long, and only twenty percent were three or more paragraphs. But more importantly, the judges indicated that the paragraphs were distinctly different from those in the higher quality papers. They seemed to be broken up in an almost compulsive manner, as if the teenagers who wrote them thought things like "I haven't had a paragraph for awhile so I'll start a new one now." This passage demonstrates the kind of paragraphing the judges were referring to:

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[6] This problem, incidentally, is not unsolvable. One of the judges indicated that teaching techniques were available that would enable the teenagers to better understand the role of paragraphing, and better construct and utilize their paragraphs.

Passage 4-3 (a complete essay)

> MICKEY MANTLE'S COURAGE IN THE FACE OF CRIPPLING PHYSICAL HANDICAPS WAS GREAT BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF THE SPORTS WORLD DID NOT THINK HE WOULD BECOME ONE OF THE GREATEST BASEBALL PLAYSERS THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN. BUT MICKEY MANTLE PROVED THAT HE HAD THE COURAGE TO SHOW THE PEOPLE OF THE SPEORTS WORLD AND HIMSELF THAT HE COULD BECOME WHAT THE WANTED TO BE.
>
> I THINK THAT MICKEY MANTLE IS GREAT AND I ADMIRE HIM VERY MUCH BECAUSE I MYSELF DID NOT THINK HE COULD BECOME AS GREAT AS HE HAS, BUT HE HAS SHOWN ME THAT HAS COURAGE AND THAT HE WANTS OTHER PEOPLE TO ENJOY SPORTS AND MAKE THEM BECOME WHAT HE HAS.

The paragraphing in these papers suggested to the judges that the authors of the middle quality essays did not understand the nature and function of a paragraph as well as they understood other aspects of writing.

Lower quality papers. The numbers of paragraphs appearing in the lower quality papers were similar to the middle quality essays: sixty-nine percent of the papers were one paragraph in length, twenty percent were two paragraphs long, and ten percent consisted of three or more paragraphs. However, the paragraphs in these essays represented, according to the judges, random thought processes. The ideas in the paragraphs (which were usually presented as generalizations) were disjointed. Passage 4-4 represents the kind of paragraphs found in lower quality papers.

Passage 4-4 (a complete essay)

> JUAN MARISHELL IS A GREAT PICHER FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS. I SAW HIM PICHING AGAINST ANOTHER TEAM. HE WON AND WAS VERY HAPPY. I SURPRISED WHEN HE WON IT BECAUSE HE HAD STRUCK OUT SOME WHERE BETWEEN 10 TO 15 STRIKE OUTS IN THAT GAME. THAT WAS THE YEAR HE WON CLOSE TO TWENTYSIX BALL GAMES. THAT SEASON HE HELPED HIS TEAM COME IN SECOND PLACE, ONE GAME BEHIND LOS ANGALES.

Punctuation and Capitalization

Thirty percent of the essays were free of punctuation errors[7], though these papers were not strictly limited to the papers of higher overall quality. Typically, higher quality papers as a group had as many punctuation errors as the middle and lower quality groups; the median paper in each group had between two and three punctuation errors. However, the punctuation error rate per hundred words was highest for middle quality essays.

Higher quality papers. The only real punctuation problem the writers of higher quality papers had involved apostrophes. The expert judges felt that apostrophes were used incorrectly as often as they were used correctly, and that the errors were as often due to inserting apostrophes where they didn't belong as they were to forgetting to insert them when they were called for (see the word SCHOOLS in Passage 4-8).

Occasionally, punctuation was left out, but these cases involved what the judges called a "tempest of feeling." The writer was so involved, apparently, that he either forgot to punctuate or he felt that punctuation would detract from what he was trying to say. For example:

Passage 4-5

> JUST AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE LOVE AND RESPECT GIVEN HIM BY THE POOR PEOPLE, WHEN KENNEDY WAS CAMPAIGNING IN THE CALIFORNIA PRIMARY HE WENT THROUGH WATTS AND HE WAS LITERALLY MOBBED BY THE PEOPLE WISHING TO EXTEND THEIR FEELINGS OF LOVE & GRATITUDE TO HIM.

In general, though, the punctuation in the higher papers was standard, sound, and unimaginative. The most commonly used punctuation marks were periods[8] and commas (the median higher quality paper contained four commas, and had 2.60 commas per hundred words). Commas were used for routine things like separating items in a series[9], and setting off subordinate clauses.

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7 See Appendix B for a description of punctuation errors.

8 Sentences will be discussed later in this chapter.

9 Optional corrections, such as commas preceding the last item in a series, were highly variable. Some teenagers chose each alternative.

Passage 4-6

> I THINK WITH THE SHAPE THE WORLD IS IN TODAY, I CANNOT ADMIRE ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT WAR, VIOLENCE, AND DISHONESTY IS RIGHT IN ANY WAY.

Passage 4-7

> TODAY, BECAUSE OF MEN LIKE ROY CAMPANELLA AND JACKIE ROBINSON, NEGROS ARE AS MUCH A PART OF BASEBALL AS WHITES.

The judges who read the essays were concerned about the limited punctuation because the use of other punctuation marks might have allowed these teenagers to express themselves more readily. Of course some writers of higher quality papers did use semicolons, colons, and the like, but these writers were atypical. Less than four percent of the papers contained colons, twelve percent semicolons, twenty-three percent quotation marks and eight percent parentheses. And often, these marks were misused when they appeared:

Passage 4-8

> THE FIRST PERSON THAT COMES TO MY MIND IS A MAN WHO THE WHOLD SCHOOL LOVES AS I DO, A MAN WHO CAN STAND THE PRESSURES OF SPORTS, A MAN TOUGH AS NAILS, A MAN TO WHOM FAILURE IS UNKNOWN; CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOLS OWN COACH JOHN SMITH.

Though the semicolon is misused, it is apparent that the writer of the passage knew something other than a comma was needed. He reached for a punctuation mark but grasped the wrong one, and he probably should be praised for attempting a reasonably sophisticated construction.

Besides commas, quotation marks were the most commonly used internal punctuation marks. They were used to set off words and expressions that were unusual or otherwise warranted emphasis. For example:

Passage 4-9

> THE GOVERNMENT AS A WHOLE HAD BEEN "SCRUBBED & HUNG OUT TO DRY" . . .

Middle quality papers. Once again, the judges found the papers to be reasonably good, with the single biggest punctuation problem again being the handling of apostrophes. For example, nouns which were both plural and possessive (such as SONS for SONS') were written without an apostrophe. Apostrophes were also added to many words when they weren't required, as in:

Passage 4-10

. . . ONE OF THE GREATEST PRESIDENT'S.

Now these kinds of mistakes were described by the judges as a result of hypercorrection; the writers knew that apostrophes are required under certain (and to them, incompletely known) circumstances, so they sprinkled apostrophes through their papers more liberally than was necessary.

The median middle quality paper contained three commas, at a rate of 1.67 per hundred words. Commas often caused problems for writers of middle quality essays, who occasionally used them where none were required, and, more regularly, failed to use them where they were required. For example:

Passage 4-11 (missing commas after a subordinate clause)

WHEN HE SAYS HE'S GOING TO DO SOMETHING HE DOESN'T LET ANYTHING STOP HIM.

Passage 4-12 (commas missing between items in a series)

WHAT HE GETS BACK IS A LOT OF HARD TIMES A LITTLE BIT OF MONEY AND SELF GRATITUDE . . .

Passage 4-13 (comma used where none was required)

BEING A NEGRO, IS WHAT MAKES HER A REAL PERSON . . .

The judges also noted that 17-year-olds regularly had problems using commas to set off parenthetical remarks, often using one comma when two should have appeared. In these cases (see Passage 4-14), the judges felt, it would probably have been better to use no commas than to use only one.

Passage 4-14

SEN ROBERT F KENNEDY, I FEEL REPRESENTS MOST IF NOT ALL OF THESE QUALITIES.

Occasionally, these writers also used commas when colons and semicolons should have been used, and colons and semicolons when commas were needed. In these cases, the respondents apparently knew that some kind of punctuation was required, but they simply didn't know what it was:

Passage 4-15 (a semicolon used in place of a comma)

. . . IT IS MORE THE FAMILY AS A WHOLE; AND THAT IS THE KENNEDY FAMILY.

Passage 4-16 (a comma used in place of a colon)

. . . DRAG RACING PROVIDED HIM WITH WHAT HE WAS SEARCHING FOR, ADVENTURE, EXCITEMENT, DANGER.

Now this is not to say that commas were always used incorrectly in the middle quality papers. When commas were used correctly, they appeared in very simple, very standard constructions. For example:

Passage 4-17 (preceding a coordinating conjunction and before items in a series)

IT IS ONE THING FOR A PERSON TO LEARN THINGS THAT OTHERS HAVE LEARNED BEFORE, BUT TO BE THE FIRST TO LEARN TAKES ALOT OF ENERGY, INTELLIGENCE, AND IMAGINATION.

Passage 4-18 (commas used to set off a parenthetical remark)

HE HAS A FUND FOR SOME DIESESE, AS I SAID BEFORE, AND HAS GONE FOR AND ACCOMPLISHED ALOT.

Other punctuation marks appeared in the middle quality papers, though they appeared much less frequently than commas. Less than three percent of the papers contained at least one colon, five percent of the papers contained semicolons, seven percent of the papers contained a set of parentheses, and eleven percent of the essays contained at least one quotation mark. Often these punctuation marks were used incorrectly (see Passage 4-15), and

occasionally commas were used when these punctuation marks were required (see Passage 4-16). Quotation marks, when they appeared, were used to set off unique terms (see Passage 4-19) or expressions the writers wished to emphasize (Passage 4-20).

Passage 4-19 (quotation marks setting off a unique term)

> . . . BUT THIS MAN HAS TO BE THE "BIG DADDY" OF THE SPORT.

Passage 4-20 (quotation marks used to create emphasis)

> I THINK THE PERSON WHOM I ADMIRE AND RESPECT IS "DON GARLITTS" ONE OF DRAG RACINGS MOST ADMIRED PERSONALITIES . . .

Lower quality papers. The judges who characterized these papers said the problems in them were attributable as much to thinking difficulties as to writing ones. Further, the problems in these papers were often of several different varieties, e.g., punctuation, awkwardness, spelling, etc. The following passage came from a lower quality essay about John F. Kennedy. The HE in the passage refers to Kennedy.

Passage 4-21

> IF HE WASN'T KILLED BY THAT CRAZY MAN. HE WOULD SAVE ALL THE WORLD'S PEOPLE FROM BEING DEATH. HE MIGHT STOP THE WARS AT VIET-NAM.

The lower quality essays, according to the judges, contained non-systematic, unpredictable punctuation. Commas and periods were the currency of punctuation in these essays, and they were passed regularly and often inappropriately (the median number of commas per paper was one per essay--only thirty-seven percent of the essays contained no commas). When commas were used, they were used in constructions such as:

Passage 4-22

> NIXON, BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN A GOOD POLITITION.

Passage 4-23

THAT'S WHAT I HEARD, BUT I LOVE ALL HER HITS, AND SHE HAS A GREAT DEAL OF PERSONALITY ESPECIALLY COLORED-PEOPLE THEY CALL NUMBER ONE SOUL SISTER.

Passage 4-24

SHE DOESN'T ONLY SING SOUL MUSIC, BUT MANY OTHER TYPES OF SONGS.

Other types of punctuation marks appeared infrequently. Colons appeared in less than one percent of the papers, semicolons were in three percent of the papers, quotation marks and parentheses were each in four percent of the essays. These marks, in other words, did not appear often enough to provide a good reading of the way they are used by the writers of lower quality essays.

Capitalization

Relatively few papers contained capitalization errors. Sixty-nine percent of all the essays contained none at all, and fourteen percent more contained only one error.[10] However, poor papers tended to contain multiple capitalization errors more frequently than the other two groups of essays.

Higher and middle quality papers. The better essays, as usual, contained relatively few errors, indicating that the teenagers who wrote the essays had a good command of the capitalization conventions. The few errors that did appear in the higher quality papers appeared to be due to carelessness, since they appeared rarely and in the company of similar though correctly capitalized words.

The most common capitalization error in the middle quality papers occurred with names of relatives (such as "Mother" and "Father") or titles (especially "President" when the term was not used with some individual), or occasionally, with common words used to describe someone or something (e.g., President Kennedy was described as starting a "Retarded Peoples Fund").

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10 See Appendix B for a description of capitalization errors.

Lower quality papers. The capitalization in these papers was described by the judges as erratic. Pronouns, verbs, and odd nouns were capitalized, indicating that the teenagers who wrote them failed to use one of the most basic conventions of writing.

Sentence Structure

Seventeen-year-olds did not have very many errors relating to sentences. Eighty-five percent of all the essays had no sentence fragments, and only one percent had more than two. Seventy-seven percent had no run-on sentences, and less than four percent had more than two. For a large proportion of 17-year-olds, run-on sentences and sentence fragments are no problem at all.[11]

Sentence fragments appeared infrequently at all levels of quality. Lower quality essays typically had less than one sentence fragment in each eassay, and this was only slightly higher than the rates for middle quality papers. Higher quality papers contained about one fragment in every second paper.

Run-on sentences were less equally distributed across the quality levels. While lower quality papers typically had more than one run-on per essay (about three run-ons in every two essays), the middle quality essays characteristically contained run-ons at half that rate (about three run-ons every four papers). The higher quality essays contained run-ons at the same rate as they contained sentence fragments: about one every two essays.

Higher quality papers. When sentence fragments appeared in the better papers, they tended to represent punctuation problems rather than ignorance of sentence structure. The typical fragments looked like this:

Passage 4-25

> THIS IS WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO BE. A MAN THAT IS QUICK.

Pronoun problems aside, the difficulty with the passage could have been remedied by replacing the first period with a colon.[12]

---

[11] See Appendix B for descriptions of sentence structure errors.

[12] It's possible, of course, that the writer used a period because he knew a comma wouldn't do, but didn't know which punctuation mark was actually required. Colons appeared only rarely in these essays.

The judges speculated that run-on sentences appearing in these papers probably represented subordination/coordination problems that might have been solved with the appropriate punctuation marks:

Passage 4-26

> THIS IS WHAT HAS MADE OUR COUNTRY SO GREAT BECAUSE OUR WISE FOREFATHERS SAID THAT IN ORDER TO BECOME NO 1 WE (IN THE USA) NEED A SENSE OF COMPETITION & THIS WE GET THROUGH FREE ENTERPRISE.

Passage 4-27

> HE FOUGHT THE WAR ON POVERTY AND MOST OF ALL HE HELPED OTHERS IN OTHER NATIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY, HUNGER AND EDUCATION.

Though there were few errors, there were also few complex sentences. The writers relied almost exclusively upon simple declarative sentences.

Passage 4-28

> ROBERT E LEE IS ONE MAN I ADMIRE. IN THE CIVIL WAR HE TURNED DOWN A MORE ADMIRAL POSITION, TO FIGHT FOR WHAT HE BELIEVED IN. HE NEVER ONCE DURING THE CIVIL WAR RESORTED TO UNUSUALLY CRUEL METHODS.

Passage 4-29

> HE DID SO MUCH FOR THE UNITED STATES IN MANY WAYS. IN TIME OF WAR HE WAS STRONG AND UN-BREAKABLE.

The most complex sentences were like these:

Passage 4-30

> PAUL HARVEY IS A GREAT MAN, AND HE IS CONCERNED WITH OUR COUNTRY AND THE PERILS IT IS FACING.

Passage 4-31

HE DOESN'T CONDEMN A PERSON BECAUSE OF PAST MISTAKES: HE ASSURES THEM THEY CAN DO BETTER IN THE FUTURE IF THEY TRY.

Sentences were rarely interrogative or imperative (only two percent of the essays contained one question and two percent contained an exclamatory sentence). All the others were similar in structure to Passages 4-28 and 4-29. Further, the sentences were remarkably constant in size, two-thirds of them running between ten and twenty-four words in length.[13]

Middle quality papers. While sentence fragments appeared more often in the middle quality papers than they did in the higher quality ones, they still appeared only irregularly. By and large, they were strings of words which could have been tacked on to the preceding or following sentences and corrected by appropriate punctuation.

Passage 4-32

HE HAS PUT EVERYTHING INTO FOOTBALL THROUGHOUT HIS YEARS OF PLAYING. WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND ALSO WHILE PLAYING PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL.

In most cases, the sentence fragments were like the one in Passage 4-32; they followed the drift of the essay, qualifying, in some way, the content of the sentences preceding or following.

Run-on sentences also appeared irregularly, and they seemed to be a result of subordination/coordination problems as they were in the higher quality papers. The following passage is typical of the run-ons in the middle quality essays.

Passage 4-33

REV KING HAD SO MANY GREAT QUALITIES THAT I COULD NOT BEGIN TO WRITE THEM DOWN, HE WAS THE MAN WHO BROUGHT THE NEGROES FROM WHAT THERE WERE TO WHERE THERE ARE AT NOW.

In this passage, as in the majority of the run-ons, the writer erroneously tacked a subordinate idea onto a more important one.

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[13] Median value for the average sentence length for these essays was 17.3 words per paper, and the median value for the standard deviation of sentence length was 6.9 words.

Technically sound sentences were characteristically simple in nature. In other words, while the sentences the 17-year-olds wrote were relatively error free, they were also very simple, stock constructions.

Passage 4-34

> I GREATLY ADMIRE ANITA BRYANT. HER HEART IS FULL OF KINDNESS. SHE HAS DONE SO MANY THINGS TO HELP PEOPLE IN ALL SITUATIONS. SHE HAS GONE TO SEE OUR MEN IN VIET NAM.

Passage 4-35

> JOHN WAYNE IS ONE OF THE GREATEST AMERICANS I KNOW. HE HAS A GREAT LOYALTY TO HIS COUNTRY AND HE IS NOT AFRAID TO STAND UP FOR WHAT HE BELIEVES IN.

The most complex sentences appeared rarely and looked like these:

Passage 4-36

> IN ALL OF HIS CIVIL RIGHTS CRUSADES, HE TRIED TO MAINTAIN NON-VIOLENCE. SOMETIMES SUCCESSFUL, HE NEVER GAVE UP.

The sentences written by the authors of middle quality essays were very similar to sentences in the higher quality essays in several respects. First, they were very simple; and second, they contained very few questions and exclamatory statements (one percent used questions, and three percent made exclamatory remarks). Further, the mean sentence length and the variability in sentence length were almost the same in each group, two-thirds of the sentences in the middle quality essays being also between 10 and 24 words in length.[14]

Lower quality papers. The poorer essays contained more run-on sentences and sentence fragments than the other two groups. Further, the errors in these cases could not be remedied by simply instructing the students how to use punctuation to subordinate and coordinate ideas. These run-on sentences and sentence fragments were unpredictable and did not follow the "drift" of the essays in which they appeared. (Also see Passage 4-35.)

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[14] The median value for mean sentence length was 16.9 words per sentence. The median value for the standard deviation of sentence length was 7.2 words.

Passage 4-37

THE RACES DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENT MOSTLY HE HELPED THE NEGROS TO WHERE THEY ARE NOW AND ALSO HE DIDN'T GO AT IN A VOILENT WAY.

Occasionally, run-on sentences appeared in lower quality essays representing different kinds of problems than the disjointed, illogical examples illustrated in Passages 4-33 and 4-37. These run-ons followed a consistent train of thought, but were unpunctuated. The following example is an entire essay one sentence in length.

Passage 4-38

I ADMIRE JOHNNY KINSER FOR HIS ABILITY TO RUN IN TRACK IN GRADE SCHOOL HE WAS KIND OF SHORT AND FAT AND COULDN'T RUN VERY FAST BUT IN HIGH SCHOOL HE WENT OUT FOR SPORTS HE WAS ALWAYS BEING TEASED ABOUT BEING FAT BUT AFTER HIGH SCHOOL NOBODY EVER SAID NOTHING ABOUT HIM BEING FAT OR SLOW IN HIGH SCHOOL HE WAS ONE OF THE FASTEST BOYS IN HIGH SCHOOL HE WENT ON TO COLLEGE AND WAS FAMOUS FOR HIS RUNNING AND BREAKING ALL TIME RECORDS.

Sentence fragments in these papers were also disjointed. In the other two groups of essays, the fragments often began with words like "because" and "that", and were usually related to the sentences preceding them.

Consider these sentence fragments:

Passage 4-39

EVER SINCE JOHN F KENNEDY WAS SHOT I FEEL SO CLOSE TO THAT FAMILY. WITH ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT FAMILY HAS FACED.

Passage 4-40

HELEN KELLER, AND HER COURAGE FOR WHAT SHE DID FOR ALL THE BLIND PONE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL SHE DID, BECAUSE I ONLY READ ONE OF HER BOOKS. AND THAT WAS WENT SHE WAS A LITTLE GIRL, AND HER LIKE STORY.

The correctly constructed sentences in these essays tended to be simple and declarative, slightly shorter and less variable in length than the middle and higher quality papers, with a sentence length ranging from 12 to 20 words[15]. There were few essays with questions and exclamatory statements (0.5% and 0.3% respectively).

The higher and middle quality essays contained sentences which were, on the whole, correct, sound, and simply constructed. The teenagers who wrote them, according to the judges, ranged in ability from competent (having a good though possibly incomplete knowledge of sentence structure) to skilled (having a solid grasp of a few basic sentence patterns). However, there were few teenagers who moved beyond that basic level, so we might say that problems with the middle and high quality essays didn't reside in the sentences the teenagers wrote, but rather in the sentences they didn't write--complex sentences expressing complex ideas.

The writers of lower quality papers, on the other hand, demonstrated that they were often unable to construct sound sentences following writing conventions closely enough to convey ideas. Certainly, sentence structure was not their only problem, for some of these teenagers had difficulty expressing even the simplest ideas.

Awkward Constructions

The appearance of awkward constructions[16] followed the same pattern as the appearance of punctuation errors: roughly the same number of errors appeared in the median paper at each level of quality, and the rate of awkward construction errors was least for higher quality papers, highest for lower quality papers. There was a difference between punctuation and awkward construction errors, though, in the rates at which errors appeared. Forty-seven percent of the papers had no awkward constructions, and fully two-thirds had fewer than one awkward construction per hundred words.

Higher quality papers. The awkward constructions appearing in the higher quality papers seemed to fall into a number of groups. Some teenagers had difficulty with "formula" constructions such as:

---

[15] The median values for the mean and standard deviation of sentence length were 16.1 and 4.1 words respectively.

[16] See Appendix B for a description of awkward constructions.

Passage 4-41 (it is not clear what MUCH is modifying)

. . . IT TAKES AS MUCH IF NOT MORE COURAGE THAN . . .

Passage 4-42

HE WAS NOT ONLY ADMIRED BY HIS FRIENDS BUT HIS FOES AS WELL.

Passage 4-43 (the same word used in different ways in the same phrase)

THE PERFECT ATTITUDE IS ONE IN WHICH ONE EXPECTS MISTAKES.

There are ambiguities due to word order and preposition use:

Passage 4-44

KENNEDY SAVED A MAN BY PULLING HIM BY HIS TEETH.

Passage 4-45

. . . RIOTING ON OUR COLLEGES . . .

Occasionally, unclear pronoun references appeared, as:

Passage 4-46

WHEN LEE SURRENDERED, HE DID IT.

Passage 4-47

HE WOULD HAVE HELPED ANYONE HE FELT NEEDED IT.

Finally, there was some redundancy of expression, a few dangling modifiers, and an occasional double negative. But by and large, the errors were similar to those involving colons and semicolons; the errors indicated that the 17-year-olds who made them had reached for one thing but grasped something else. The judges felt that the writers should be commended for their efforts rather than chastised for their mistakes.

Middle quality papers. Awkward construction in the middle quality essays were most often the result of three things: preposition misuse, pronoun misuse, and word omission. The writers of these essays often chose prepositions which were slightly off target. They wrote things like:

Passage 4-48

> . . . DEDICATED HIS LIFE TOWARDS THE THINGS IN WHICH HE BELIEVED IN.

Passage 4-49

> . . . MUST HAVE MADE THE KENNEDYS BITTER TO THE U.S.

Passage 4-50

> HE HAD PRIDE ON.

The writers of the middle quality papers also had difficulties with pronouns, occasionally using nominative pronouns for possessives or possessives for nominatives. More commonly, their pronoun referents were unclear. Consider the following passages:

Passage 4-51

> IT USED TO SEEM TO ME THAT IF YOU FAIL THE FIRST TIME, JUST GIVE UP, BUT NOW IF I JUST KEEP AT IT AND WORK A LITTLE HARD, I DO HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF ACCOMPLISHING IT.

Passage 4-52

> LIKE WHAT MAKE SEALS GO ALL THE WAY FROM THEIR HOME IN THE ARTIC TO GO TO A SMALL ISLAND IN THE ATLANTIC, WHY DO SAMOND GO TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY WERE BORN JUST TO LAY EGGS AND DIE. ANSWERS LIKE THOSE ARE UNKNOWN BUT MEN LIKE COUSTOE GO AND TRY TO FIND OUT THESE THINGS.

Often, in middle quality papers, awkward constructions resulted from words being left out of sentences.

Passage 4-53

> HE DOES WHAT WANTS HIM TO DO.

The teenagers who wrote these papers often did not distinguish between the things they were talking about and the words representing those things. In such cases, sentences like this one appeared:

Passage 4-54

> . . . BECAUSE HE HOLDS "WORLD CHAMPION SADDLE BRONCS RIDER" . . .

The writer of this passage was referring to the title.

Lower quality papers. Almost all the sentences contained awkward constructions. Indeed, the judges speculated that the writers of lower quality essays simply didn't know what a reasonable construction looked like. The following two passages are examples of extreme awkwardness:

Passage 4-55

> IT WAS ANOTHER I LIKE IN WHEN HE PLAY IN THE NAME WAS THE EGG AND I.

Passage 4-56

> WASHINGTON IS STILL FOUND TO BE A VERY TRUTHFUL PERSON WHICH IS SHOWN IN HIS STAY AT FORT SUMTURE IN THE WINTER 1887 WHICH YOU MAY RECALL.

The judges felt that the poor papers were written by 17-year-olds who had no real grasp of the knowledges and skills required for written expression. For whatever reasons, these young writers had only the weakest grasp on the abilities needed to make themselves understood through punctuation use and the building of meaningful constructions. The teenagers who wrote the middle quality essays, on the other hand, had a reasonably good command of punctuation and construction skills. The question to be asked about this group is why they did not use a wider variety of punctuation marks and constructions than they did. It is possible that their abilities to express themselves are limited because they restrict themselves to commas and periods. It is possible that if they could use colons, semicolons, and the like, they would be able to express themselves more completely and succinctly. The same concerns also hold for the writers of higher quality essays. These teenagers also have a solid knowledge of the basic punctuation required to express themselves, though it is possible that additional instruction might enable them to express themselves more clearly, or bring out the more complex ideas that they may very well hold.

Agreement

About half of all the essays had no agreement errors at all, and another 25% had only one agreement error. Most 17-year-olds did a pretty good job of handling agreement situations, though there tended to be more errors in the lower quality papers than in the better ones.

Higher quality papers. Subject/verb agreement difficulties appeared rarely in these essays. When they did occur, the incorrect construction usually involved a complex predicate, such as:

Passage 4-57

IT SCARES AND DISGUST ME . . .

Errors often occurred in ambitious constructions involving sequences of tenses. These kinds of errors were recognized by the judges as attempts to try constructions more sophisticated than the ones they had been using.

Passage 4-58

IF THIS GREAT MAN WOULD HAVE NOT BEEN ASSASSINATED HE COULD HAVE DONE . . .

Passage 4-59

AFTER HE HAD SERVED HIS REQUIRED TIME HE HAS RETURNED . . .

Pronoun reference errors were almost non-existent, though the pronoun WHICH was used to refer to persons, as in

Passage 4-60

A PERSON WHICH . . .

There was a certain amount of redundancy associated with the appearance of some nominative pronouns; phrases like

Passage 4-61

. . . HE HIMSELF . . .

appeared. Occasionally, the antecedent for a nominative pronoun was either ambiguous or missing altogether.

Middle quality papers. Although the number of agreement errors for middle quality papers is only slightly higher than for the higher quality papers, different kinds of errors appeared. Only sequence of tense errors were common to both groups (see Passages 4-58 and 4-59), while errors in number appeared primarily in the middle quality papers (Passage 4-62 and 4-63). Pronouns without referents, and shifts from "she" (or "he") to "you" appeared regularly, though often the same writer would use pronouns both correctly and incorrectly.

Passage 4-62

THERE WERE NOBODY . . .

Passage 4-63

THERE HAS BEEN MANY MISFORTUNES . . .

Lower quality papers. The judges said the agreement problems in these papers indicated illiteracy. Constructions such as the following appeared regularly:

Passage 4-64

THEY WAS GOING TO . . .

Passage 4-65

HE ARE A GREAT PLAYER TO ME.

Passage 4-66

A SOLDIERS WAS WALKING . . .

Finally, many typically oral constructions appeared such as:

Passage 4-67

MARTIN LUTHER KING, HE . . .

Summarizing, the judges again found that the 17-year-olds who wrote higher and middle quality papers had some command of agreement situations. The lower quality papers, on the other hand, were apparently written by teenagers who did not know how to communicate effectively in written English.

Spelling and Word Usage

Errors involving words--either misspellings or word choice errors--appeared frequently. Only twenty-nine percent of the essays were completely free of misspellings and only twenty-two percent more had only one error per paper. Similarly, only forty-three percent of the essays had no word choice errors, and only a quarter more had only one. In terms of error rates, though, the picture is somewhat different. Two-thirds of the essays had one or fewer misspellings per hundred words, and slightly less than two-thirds of the papers had one or fewer word choice errors per hundred words.

Twenty-six percent of the teenagers' papers had no errors of either type, though in the other seventy-four percent knowing how many errors of one kind (e.g., spelling) were in a paper gave no information about how many errors of the other type appeared.

The "vocabulary" in each paper--the number of different words in the paper--was related to the total length of each essay, longer papers containing the greatest number of different words. Lower quality papers typically were 88-92 words in length and had 56-58 different words, middle quality papers typically displayed 88-90 different words and were 148-152 words in length, and higher quality papers characteristically displayed 102-104 different words in essays of 180-184 words.

The diction measures made by using a computer program indicated that the range of vocabulary in the essays increased as the quality of the essays improved. Typically, function words (such as prepositions and articles) accounted for a larger percentage of the words in the poorer papers than in the middle or higher essays.

Higher quality papers. There were not many word choice errors in these papers, and few of them were really blatantly incorrect usages. One student talked about Jacqueline Kennedy's PHYSICAL COURAGE when he really meant "emotional fortitude". More typically, errors appeared that might imply that the 17-year-olds had some idea of what the words meant, though their knowledge was not complete. The following are examples: (the misused words are underscored)

Passage 4-68

> HE CONDEMNED THE RIOTS, DISTURBANCES, AND VIOLENCE PORTRAYED BY NEGRO YOUNSTERS IN SCHOOLS.

Passage 4-69

. . . NO DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE.

There was also some difficulty in making nouns and adjectives out of verbs:

Passage 4-70

. . . HIS WISDOM AND TOLERATES . . .

There were a few errors in the mixing of different levels of usage--occasionally, very informal words would appear in essays that tended to be formal:

Passage 4-71

. . . SCHEDULED PERSONAL APPEARANCE . . .
IN HICK TOWN . . .

The problems, according to the judges, may have stemmed from a number of sources. Fuzzy thinking was apparent in some cases (see Passage 4-72), while words were run together in the best Madison Avenue tradition in other cases (Passages 4-73 through 75). Some errors were certainly due to carelessness, but others were due to an admirable ambitiousness--the teenagers were trying to use words with specific meanings, though they didn't have the meanings down as well as they might have (see Passage 4-76).

Passage 4-72

I WILL ALWAYS ADMIRE THE MEMORIES OF THIS MAN.

The teenagers also created new words by combining already existing words, and using nouns as verbs, and verbs as nouns.

Passage 4-73

. . . THESE THINGS WERE ASSUMEDLY BEING
RENEWED . . .

Passage 4-74

SHE HAD A BAD CHILDLIFE.

Passage 4-75

. . . WE'LL BUILD A MINIPARK . . .

Passage 4-76

. . . EYEWITNESSED . . .

Less than three percent of these higher quality papers had one or more misspellings of common words, and seventeen percent of the papers had one or more misspellings of proper nouns. However, the rate of misspellings of proper nouns was such that only four percent of the papers had more than one misspelling per hundred words. The misspelling of uncommon words was more frequent. Only one-third of the essays had no misspellings of uncommon words, and only thirty percent more had only one. Twenty-nine percent of the essays had more than one misspelling of an uncommon word per hundred words of essay.

The difficulties with proper nouns seemed to revolve around letters and letter combinations that are not heard clearly--President Kennedy's wife's name, for example, was JACQUALINE, and Martin Luther King, Jr., won the NOBLE prize. Uncommon words that were misspelled often reflected ible/able confusion, or an occasional dropped syllable. People were ASSI-NATED, for example, instead of "assassinated". Careless errors, such as ALOT for a lot, also appeared, and most of the misspellings of common words were contained in this category. Sometimes, too, the judges found a few incorrect applications of rules (e.g., misdoubled consonants).

Middle quality papers. The word choice errors in these papers tended to be less frequent than the judges had expected, though the reduced frequency (they said) was due to the reduced ambitiousness of the respondents. The writers simply limited themselves (intentionally or unintentionally) to very simple language. Word choice often seemed to reflect hazy thinking:

Passage 4-77

THE TRAGEDY OF LOOSING ONE'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS IS OF EXTREME HONOR AND FORTITUDE.

Though sometimes errors may simply have been due to ignorance:

Passage 4-78

. . . HE MADE A SPEAK . . .

Passage 4-79

. . . HIS WANT TO GET AN EDUCATION . . .

There were relatively few misspellings of common words: only five percent of the papers had one or more of them and only two percent of the essays had a misspelling per hundred words of essay. On the other hand, only thirty percent of the essays were completely free of misspellings of uncommon words, and another thirty percent had one error per paper. Half of the papers had one or more misspellings of uncommon words per hundred words. Three-quarters of the papers had no misspellings of proper nouns and one-sixth of the papers had one misspelling. And only ten percent of the essays had more than one misspelled proper noun per hundred words of essay.

The misspellings in the middle quality papers were often due to deleted syllables (such as BEGGING for beginning and TAMNY HALL for Tammany Hall). Some single words were broken into double words--OVER SEAS, BACK FIRED, ALL THOUGH, and ALL WAYS, for example--and other words were not immediately recognizable. After much tought, the judges decided that FARIGLE was supposed to be fragile, for instance.

Lower quality papers. The range of vocabulary in these papers was constrained. The adjectives, for example, were pretty well limited to SWEET, NICE, GOOD, POPULAR, GREAT, KIND, WONDERFUL, and so on, with or without intensifiers. The 17-year-olds who wrote these papers seemed to achieve intensity, according to the judges, through repetition rather than word choice. Vocabulary, apparently, was not an important aspect of writing to them.

Misspellings appeared more frequently in these papers. Only eighty-one percent of the essays had no misspellings of common words, with another seventeen percent having only one such error. Six percent of the papers had more than one misspelling per hundred words. Sixteen percent of the papers had no misspellings of uncommon words and only eleven percent more contained only one misspelling of this kind. Median lower quality papers had 3.42 misspellings of uncommon words for each hundred words of essay. Three quarters of the essays contained no misspellings of proper nouns and eighteen percent contained one.

Misspellings here were often phonetic: SUM appeared in place of some, WHICH for wish, LIVE for life, AGANCE for against, DOND for don't, WEN for when. Proper nouns, when they were misspelled, were also spelled the way the writers of these papers heard them. The center for the Los Angeles Lakers, for example, was named WILT CHAMBLEAN. Transposition occurred regularly: TRAILS for trials, GRILS for girls, and so on. And some words were simply not recognizable:

Passage 4-80

SHE MADE A SCETT IN SIX COONDY.

Homonyms[17]

Four sets of homonyms that typically cause difficulties for many people were examined in the papers written by 17-year-olds.

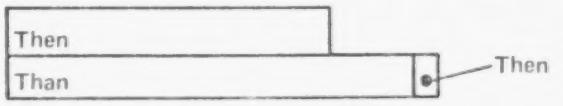
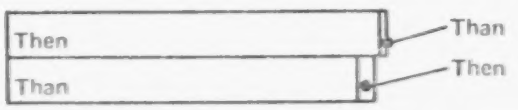
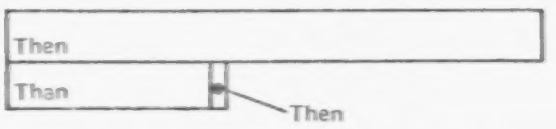
The words then and than had a combined mean appearance of .34 times per essay in lower and middle quality papers, i.e., one or the other of these words appeared about once every three papers. The mean appearance for these words in the longer, better essays was .27. But more importantly, the particular homonym used did not stay the same: the lower papers made heavier use of the temporal then, the middle quality papers used both homonyms with equal frequency, and the higher quality essays employed the comparative than most regularly. Since the comparative than is often used to qualify ideas and indicate relative importance (see Passage 4-81), and since it tends to add to the clarity of an essay, we might speculate that its appearance may well be related to the quality of an essay. That would explain its more frequent appearance in the better papers.

Passage 4-81

SOMEDAY SHE'LL BE MORE THAN JUST A FAMOUS WIDOW.

The writers had some difficulty deciding when to use then or than. By and large, they chose correctly, but when they did not, they most often used then when than was required.

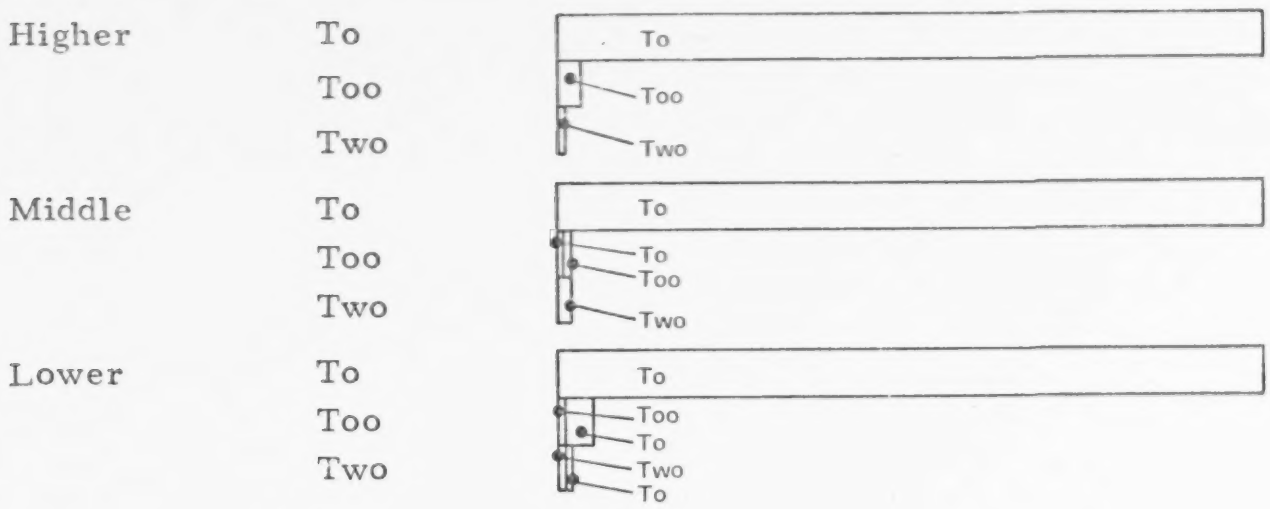
Figure 4-3: How then and than were used in the 17-year-old famous person essays. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.

Quality Level	Homonym Should Have Been	Homonym Actually Used
Higher	Then	
	Than	
Middle	Then	
	Than	
Lower	Then	
	Than	

[17] See note page 28.

The "to" words appeared regularly. To, too, or two had a mean appearance of 3.52 times in lower quality papers, 5.27 times in middle quality papers, and 6.34 in higher quality essays. These increasing rates of occurance may reflect the increasing length of the papers themselves, since lower quality papers were shortest, and higher quality papers tended to be the longest. The poorer papers showed some confusion when the word too or two was required, the writers regularly using to in place of the other two homonyms. Middle quality papers only showed indecision about too, which was replaced by to about as often as it appeared. Higher quality papers were free of problems with those words.

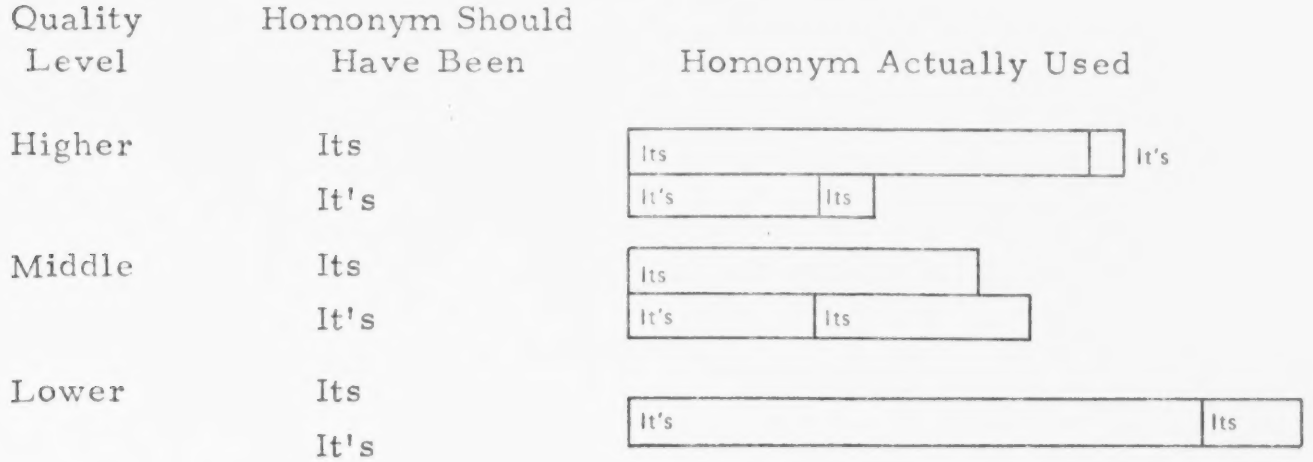
Figure 4-4: How to, too, and two were used in the 17-year-old famous person essays. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



It's and its presented a pattern similar to the one for then and than: its appeared not at all in the lower papers, as often as it's in the middle quality papers, and about twice as often as it's in the higher quality papers. In part, this may be true for the same sort of reasoning that explained then and than. The possessive its indicates an attribute of a thing; it qualifies whatever it refers to. And qualification, of course, is an attribute of the better papers.

The its homonym pattern differed from the then pattern in two respects. First, its and it's appeared less frequently: .02 times per paper for lower quality, and .08 times per paper for middle and higher quality essays. Second, there was more confusion about which homonym to use, invariably when it's was required, and, in the higher quality papers, when its was called for.

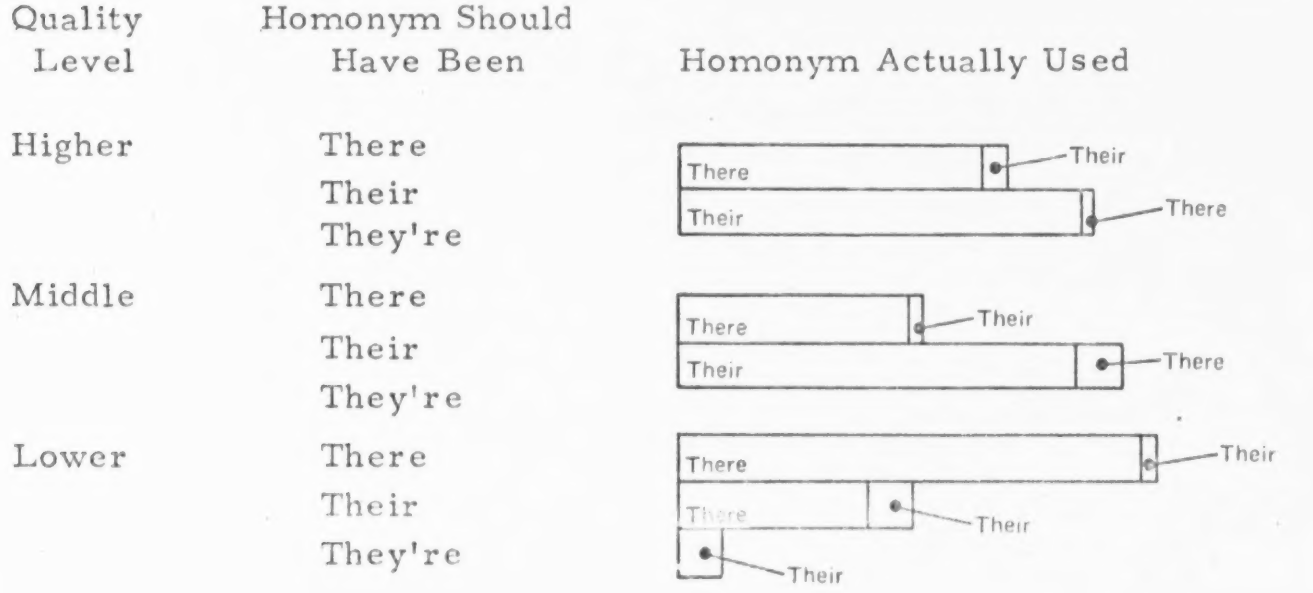
Figure 4-5: How its and it's were used in the 17-year-old famous person essays. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



The three there homonyms (there, their, and they're) also displayed interesting use patterns. They're was attempted only in the lower quality papers, possibly because of the formal nature of the topic. It is possible that the teenagers who wrote the middle and higher quality essays simply avoided the use of contractions. There was some confusion involving the use of there when their was called for, and their when there should have been used.

The appearance of these words in the middle quality papers was roughly twice that in the lower papers, .64 and .35 respectively. The mean rate of appearance in the better papers was the same as the rate in middle quality papers, .64, even though the higher quality papers tended to be the longest.

Figure 4-6: How there, their, and they're were used in the 17-year-old famous person essays. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym was used.



Summary

With the exception of word errors, especially misspellings, the higher and middle quality essays were sound. Yet they were only sound in terms of basics; the teenagers who wrote them produced simple sentences, used common words, and expressed simple ideas, indicating that they had a command of the most fundamental conventions of written language. They seldom attempted to go beyond these basics. Possibly, they didn't use more sophisticated punctuation or constructions because they felt no need for them; the ideas they wished to express were simple enough to be conveyed with periods and commas in the simple statements they used. But it's also possible that if these 17-year-olds learn to think more critically, to examine ideas more carefully, they'll begin to depart from the basic, simple writing patterns they displayed.

Yet it is true that the higher and middle quality papers represent more than 50% (the top 50%) of the 17-year-olds' essays. This means that at least half of the 17-year-olds have some command of the basic conventions of written English. Only the lower quality papers, representing the bottom 15% of the essays, demonstrated a serious lack of ability to use basic writing skills.

Table 4-1 - Statistics for Age 17 famous person exercise papers.

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Paragraphing	Error Counts	Number of Paragraphing Errors	High	.1 *	.1 *	87	12	0	0
			Middle	.1 *	.1 *	93	6	0	0
			Low	.1 *	.1 *	95	4	2	0
	Computer Analysis	Number of Paragraphs	High	1.0	1.6	1	42	17	18
			Middle	1.1	1.9	0	60	20	9
			Low	2.3	2.4	1	68	21	8
		Mean Paragraph Length	High	**	6.6	Q_1 = 3.6		Q_3 = 10.2	
			Middle	**	6.4	3.7		9.7	
			Low	**	4.1	2.4		6.4	
Punctuation	Error Counts	Punctuation Errors	High	2.1	3.1	10	29	10	11
			Middle	2.5	3.4	12	14	20	14
			Low	3.1	3.1	14	16	22	15
	Computer Analysis	Number of Commas	High	2.7	5.1	7	9	12	10
			Middle	1.8	2.9	19	18	14	10
			Low	1.2	1.6	36	26	20	4
		Number of Colons	High	+ *	+ *	97	3	0	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	98	2	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
		Number of Semicolons	High	+ *	1.7*	86	12	1	1
			Middle	+ *	+ *	95	4	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	96	4	0	0
		Number of Quotation Marks	High	.2 *	.4 *	76	0	16	1
			Middle	.1 *	.2 *	88	1	7	1
			Low	.1 *	.1 *	94	1	4	0

Table 4-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Punctuation cont'd	Computer Analysis	Number of Parentheses	High	+ *	.1 *	91	6	3	0
			Middle	+ *	.1 *	92	7	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	97	3	0	0
Capitalization	Error Counts	Number of Capitaliza- tion Errors	High	.6	.8	67	19	8	5
			Middle	.7	.8	69	14	9	2
			Low	1.0	1.1	54	22	13	3
Sentence Structure	Error Counts	Sentence Fragments	High	.5	.6	84	11	3	1
			Middle	.6	.7	74	19	4	1
			Low	.8	.8	70	16	7	6
		Run-on Sentences	High	.6	.6	85	13	1	0
			Middle	.6	.8	70	20	5	4
			Low	1.6	1.5	37	32	13	5
	Computer Analysis	Number of Declarative Sentences	High	5.8	11.0	Q_1 = 8.6		Q_3 = 13.2	
			Middle	6.0	9.0	6.6		11.6	
			Low	5.9	5.8	3.1		8.6	
		Number of Interrogative Sentences	High	+ *	+ *	97	2	1	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0

* Single stars indicate arithmetic means, otherwise they are trimeans (see Tukey, J., Exploratory Data Analysis, Limited Preliminary Edition, Addison-Wesley, 1970, p. 2-25).

** Double stars indicate values not reported because of inapplicability.

+ A plus sign indicates a value greater than .00 and less than .05.

When much variability appears in the data, quartile values are reported: Q_1 is the 25th centile, Q_3 is the 75th centile.

Table 4-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors: Per 100 Words	Mean Errors: Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Sentence Structure cont'd	Computer Analysis	Number of Imperative Sentences	High	+ *	+ *	98	1	1	0
			Middle	+ *	+ *	98	2	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
		Mean Sentence Length	High	**	17.7	Q_1 = 15.0		Q_3 = 20.8	
			Middle	**	16.9	13.7		20.2	
			Low	**	17.2	12.3		24.4	
		S.D. Sentence Length	High	**	6.9	Q_1 = 5.5		Q_3 = 8.8	
			Middle	**	6.7	4.8		8.9	
			Low	**	5.6	3.3		8.3	
	Error Counts	Awkward Constructions	High	.9	1.3	41	36	16	5
			Middle	1.3	1.7	28	35	17	11
			Low	1.8	2.0	24	33	14	15
Agreement	Error Counts	Number of Agreement Errors	High	.9	1.1	46	35	9	7
			Middle	1.2	1.6	34	32	15	13
			Low	2.5	2.4	21	25	18	9
Spelling and Word Usage	Error Counts	Misspellings	High	1.2	1.9	Q_1 = 2.8		Q_3 = 1.0	
			Middle	1.9	2.4	4.1		1.1	
			Low	3.6	3.4	5.5		1.8	
		Word Choice Errors	High	.9	1.1	Q_1 = 1.9		Q_3 = .5	
			Middle	1.4	1.9	3.1		.9	
			Low	2.9	2.8	4.7		1.5	
	Computer Analysis	Misspellings of Common Words	High	+ *	+ *	97	3	0	0
			Middle	+ *	.1 *	94	5	1	0
			Low	1.3 *	.2 *	80	17	3	0

Table 4-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Spelling and Word Usage cont'd	Computer Analysis	Misspellings of Uncommon Words	High	.8	1.7	Q_1 = .7		Q_3 = 2.8	
			Middle	1.4	2.3	1.1		4.2	
			Low	3.4	3.5	1.8		5.9	
		Misspellings of Proper Nouns	High	.5	.6	85	11	2	1
			Middle	.6	.7	74	17	4	1
			Low	.6	.7	72	19	3	1
		Mean Word Length	High	**	4.2	Q_1 = 4.1		Q_3 = 4.4	
			Middle	**	4.2	4.0		4.3	
			Low	**	3.9	3.7		4.1	
		S. D. Word Length	High	**	2.2	Q_1 = 2.1		Q_3 = 2.4	
			Middle	**	2.2	2.0		2.4	
			Low	**	1.9	1.7		2.1	
		Total Number of Words	High	**	182.2	Q_1 = 150.9		Q_3 = 214.0	
			Middle	**	149.9	103.1		194.8	
			Low	**	92.6	61.4		126.8	
		Number of Different Words	High	58.4	104.6	Q_1 = 89.7		Q_3 = 122.2	
			Middle	60.9	89.1	68.5		110.0	
			Low	64.4	57.4	42.8		71.2	

CHAPTER V

Adults: The Commissioner Stroud Letter

Introduction

While 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds were asked to write essays, young adults were asked to write formal letters to a public official expressing a viewpoint on an issue. The exercise looked like this:

> The State Highway Department announced today that it is considering plans for an additional interchange on the expressway between Market Beach and the state capitol. The new interchange would provide access to the historic Windsor Valley through the village of Windsorville, and State Highway 260. Highway Commissioner Oliver P. Stroud said that his department had no plans originally to locate an interchange at Windsorville, but official opinion was swayed by a strong campaign led by Windsorville Mayor Charles Kronbacher. Commissioner Stroud quoted a letter from the Mayor: "Windsorville has slept long enough in the colonial past. That was 200 years ago, and times change. Bringing in the people who will develop the valley will bring us up to the times and lower the tax rate, too." Commissioner Stroud admitted, however, that there is opposition to the proposed construction. Township Committeeman Milton Swift has already expressed his official opposition in an open letter to township residents. Swift cited such problems as unwanted traffic, broken zoning ordinances, and loss of the valley's historical and rural tradition.
>
> Let us say that you are a resident of Windsorville and have definite feelings about the Highway Department's plans. In the space below write a letter to Commissioner Stroud, telling him how you feel about the planned interchange and why you feel that way.

Twenty-nine percent of the adults who were asked to write letters in response to the exercise refused to cooperate. This unusually high rejection rate may be due to many reasons, though we will consider only two. The first reason relates to the exercise itself: John C. Mellon, Associate Professor of Education at Boston University, believes the exercise is both complex and unmotivating.[1] Adults did not write, he would say, because they are unmoved by the idea of writing about an imaginary issue. And indeed, one of the respondents who did write said something like that.

Passage 5-1

> I CANNOT EXPRESS AN OPINION ON SOMETHING THAT I AM HONESTLY NOT INTERESTED IN.

It is not clear, though, what the respondent was uninterested in: the assessment, or the act of writing.

The second explanation was forwarded by Edmund J. Farrell, Assistant Executive Secretary, National Council of Teachers of English. He believes that adults refused to write because they felt threatened:

> Many adults refused to write because they feared failure. Once out of the clutches of compulsory education, they were damned if they would willingly resubject themselves to sadists with red pencils.[2]

Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine whether either reason is correct: we have little data from the respondents beyond the letters they wrote and their responses to other exercises. The only factual information we have is that almost one-third of the adults refused to write.

The judges who characterized the papers written by the other seventy-one percent of the sample found that low quality papers contained inconsistencies, oversights, and errors they believed could only result from a reluctance to write at all. Many of these papers, like Passage 5-1, consisted of a single sentence.[3]

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[1] Mellon, John C., "Roundtable Review," Research in the Teaching of English, (in press).

[2] Farrell, Edmund J., "Implications of National Assessment Writing Results," English Journal, 1971, p. 1119.

[3] These papers received low overall quality scores because they were so short and sketchy.

The number of adults interviewed in the assessment amounted to less than half of the number of respondents assessed at each of the other three age levels. Because of the smaller number of papers collected (and because of the high non-response rate), the papers were divided into two groups for characterization and computer analysis--high and low quality--rather than three as in the cases of the 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds. The low quality group accounted for fifty-eight percent of the written letters, and the high quality group contained the remaining forty-two percent.

The papers in the low quality group ranged from examples such as these:

Passage 5-2

I DON'T CARE.

Passage 5-3

I WOOD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSAL, OF A NEW INTERCHANGE BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITOL. PLEASE REPLY.

Passage 5-4

I AGREE WITH THE HIGHWAY DP BUT ONE THING WITCH WOULD HELP US ON OUR TAX'S (STATE & CITY) IS TO HAVE TOWL LIKE ILL.

to letters like these:

Passage 5-5

ROUTE 0
BOX 00
WINDSORVILLE, NC
JULY 19, 1969
00000

STATE HIGHWAY DEPT.
RALEIGH, N C, 27605
ATTN: COMM: OLIVER P. STROUD

DEAR SIR:

I AM MERELY A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, N C, AND I FEEL SURE THAT THIS NEW 'NTERCHANGE THROUGH OUR FAIR TOWN WOULD INDEED BE A BLESSING.

IT WOULD BRING MORE BUSINESS, TOURIST TRADE ETC. THIS VERY INTERCHANGE COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE IN WHETHER OUR TOWN PROSPERS OR DIES.

I THINK YOUR UPMOST & UNDIVIDED ATTENTION BE PLACED ON THIS PROJECT.

SINCERELY YOURS,

MR RESPONDENT.[4]

The highest quality responses covered letters like these:

Passage 5-6

DEAR COMMISSIONER:

AS A LIFELONG RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, I FEEL A NEW INTERCHANGE IS NOT NECESSARY. I LIKE THE BEAUTY OF THE VALLEY THE WAY IT IS. WE HAVE ENOUGH SUPER HIGHWAYS NOW. THE PEOPLE BENEFITING FROM THIS WOULD NOT APPRECIATE THE BEAUTY OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VALLEY. THEY WOULD BE USING IT FOR SPEED, AND CONVENIENCE IN GETTING TO THE STATE CAPITAL.

LET'S LEAVE THE HISTORIC WINDSOR VALLEY PEACEFUL & SERENE AS IT IS NOW.

SINCERELY,

LIFE LONG RESIDENT.

Passage 5-7

123 STREET
CITY, STATE
JUNE 26, 1969

STATE DEPT OF HIGHWAYS
STATE CAPITAL, VIRGINIA

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[4] In order to preserve anonymity, all names have been removed from the letters and replaced by MR or MRS RESPONDENT. Similar changes were made in inside addresses when such addresses appeared.

ATTN: COMMISSIONER OLIVER P. STROUD

SIR:

AS A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, VIRGINIA, I WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO EXPRESS MY VIEWS CONCERNING THE PROPOSED ADDITIONAL INTERCHANGE ON THE EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITOL. AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE PROPOSED PLANS WOULD CALL FOR SOME DEFINITE CHANGES IN THIS AREA, CHANGES WHICH I AM NOT SURE WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO ALL CONCERNED.

IN WINDSORVILLE, CONTRARY TO OUR MAYOR'S OPINION, WE ARE NOT LIVING IN THE COLONIAL PAST OF TWO-HUNDRED YEARS AGO. WE ARE A MODERN, PROGRESSIVE, AND FORWARD-THINKING GROUP OF AMERICAN CITIZENS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE RICH, UNIQUE HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF OUR AREA, AND THE PROUD TRADITIONS OF OUR ANCESTORS WHICH HAVE BEEN TO SOME EXTENT, CARRIED INTO OUR LIVES TODAY, WE HAVE A VERY DEFINITE APPRECIATION AND RESPECT FOR THE RICH HERITAGE WITH WHICH WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED.

THERE IS NO ONE IN WINDSORVILLE WHO WANTS TO KEEP OUR TOWN CLOSED TO OUTSIDERS, WHETHER THEY BE VISITORS OR NEW RESIDENTS. AS EVIDENCE OF THIS, I CITE OUR LATEST CENSUS FIGURES WHICH SHOW A DEFINITE INCREASE IN POPULATION EVEN THOUGH THE ACTUAL BIRTHRATE HAS DECLINED. ALSO, THE MOTELS AND RESTAURANTS ARE EXTREMELY BUSY FROM EARLY SPRING UNTIL EARLY AUTUMN, MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE THOUSANDS OF VISITORS WHO COME HERE EACH YEAR. BUT, I MAINTAIN, PART OF OUR AREA'S CHARM IS THE ILLUSION OF BEING RATHER ISOLATED FROM OUR SURROUNDING AREAS. PEOPLE WHO TRULY CARE ABOUT TOURING AN AREA TO SEE ITS HISTORICAL SIGHTS DO NOT CARE TO COME SPEEDING INTO THE 18TH CENTURY AT 80 MPH ON A SUPERHIGHWAY. IF THIS INTERCHANGE WERE LAID AT OUR BACK DOOR AS PROPOSED, I SEE ONLY DISASTER FOR OUR TOURIST BASED ECONOMIC ENDEAVERS. THE ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION SITE ITSELF

WOULD TAKE PART OF THE LONG LANE AND ALL OF THE FORMAL GARDENS OF THE OLD KINGBERRY ESTATE, ONE OF WINDSORVILLE'S MOST POPULAR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

FOR THESE FEW REASONS I'VE MENTIONED, AND ALSO FOR MANY MORE WHICH I'VE NOT INCLUDED, I ASK YOU TO RE-CONSIDER. DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO STOP THIS NEW PLAN FROM BEING PUT INTO ACTION. GO BACK TO THE ORIGINAL DRAWINGS AND ROUTINGS. WINDSORVILLE WILL SURVIVE IN, AND KEEP PACE WITH THE 20TH CENTURY MUCH MORE EFFECTIVELY WITHOUT THIS PROPOSED INTERCHANGE.

THANK YOU.

MR RESPONDENT

Essay Length

Passages 5-2 through 5-5 delimit the range in the low quality papers, Passages 5-6 and 5-7 describe the range within the high quality papers. As the examples indicate, the better letters tend to be longer, containing more specific details. Departures from the instructions--such as the addition of information in Passage 5-7--tended to be limited to the high quality papers.

One more point needs to be made about the lengths of the papers. Half of the high quality papers were 70 to 110 words in length with the median length being 89 words. Half of the low quality papers ranged from 32 to 66 words in length. The median low quality paper was 48 words long. The shortness of these letters (i.e., less than 100 words) caused the error rates (i.e., errors per hundred words), to be higher than the actual numbers of total errors.

Paragraphing

Paragraphing errors[5] appeared in less than two percent of the letters, with the papers containing errors being pretty equally split between the high and low quality groups.

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[5] For descriptions of paragraphing errors, see Appendix B.

High quality papers. The judges perceived what they called an unusual awareness of paragraph requirements. The adults who wrote these papers showed what was termed "a newspaper reader's sense of the need to set off separate ideas and separate thoughts." These paragraphs usually began with an acceptable lead--a brief statement conveying the thrust of the paragraph; the remainder of the paragraph is usually devoted to a clarification and expansion of that lead.[6]

Because the paragraphing in the high quality letters closely resembled the paragraphing found in newspaper journalism, the judges were not surprised to find one-sentence paragraphs--a common occurrence in newswriting.

Low quality papers. The concept of paragraphing errors does not really apply to these papers, the judges implied, because the adults who wrote the letters apparently did not know what a paragraph was. Further, the ideas they proposed were sufficiently diffuse to defy any real separation from one another. The absence of paragraphing errors, in other words, was due to the lack of necessity for paragraphs. The letters in Passages 5-3 and 5-4 exemplify the nature of the problem.

Punctuation and Capitalization

Only fourteen percent of the letters were completely free of punctuation errors[7] and these papers were of low quality as often as they were of high quality. The median low quality papers had fewer than two errors while the median high quality papers had two punctuation errors. When the punctuation errors per hundred words of letter were computed, the median values for low quality papers and high quality papers were 3.67 and 2.69 respectively.

High quality papers. The judges described the punctuation use in these papers as inconsistent. Commas, for example, were often used correctly, and incorrectly in similar situations. Passages 5-8 and 5-9, for example, contain commas used to set off introductory phrases, while Passage 5-10 does not.

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[6] The exceptions to this generalization are the paragraphs beginning with subordinate clauses. These paragraphs are usually the first in the letters and serve an introductory function. Passage 5-8 contains an example of such a sentence.

[7] For description of punctuation errors, see Appendix B.

Passage 5-8

AS A LONG TIME RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS MY DISAPPROVAL OF THE INTERCHANGE PROPOSED FOR MY VILLAGE.

Passage 5-9

I URGE YOU TO CONSIDER THE WISHES OF THOSE WHO RESIDE IN WINDSORVILLE, AS OPPOSED TO THOSE OF MAYOR KRONBACHER, WHO FEELS THAT PROGRESS IS DEPENDENT ON KEEPING UP WITH TECHNICAL CHANGES.

Passage 5-10

AS A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE INTERCHANGE ON THE EXPRESSWAY.

They were used to do other things as well, such as setting off appositives,

Passage 5-11

I WOULD LIKE TO ENDORSE THE POSITION OF THE MAYOR OF OUR CITY, CHARLES KRONBACHR, TO ADD THE ADDITIONAL INTERCHANGE ON THE EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITOL.

or setting off subordinate clauses (see Passage 5-8).

Commas were used regularly--high quality papers usually contained between three and four of them, and only eleven percent of the papers contained none at all. However, the commas appeared most often because of the letter format of the exercise, which calls for them in addresses and in closings (e.g., SINCERELY,).

Aside from the commas, other punctuation marks appeared rarely. Colons appeared in slightly more than forty percent of the letters, though in all but about two percent of the cases they were used because of the letter format implicit in the exercise's requirements.

Passage 5-12

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD:

Only twelve percent of the letters contained semicolons, and they appeared almost exclusively as variant forms of colon use:

Passage 5-13

DEAR SIR;

When quotation marks appeared (eleven percent of the high quality papers contained them) they tended to reflect irony. The adults who used them created constructions like this:

Passage 5-14

IT IS MY VIEW THAT THESE WOULD FAR OUTWEIGH ANY DETRIMENTS CAUSED BY "TOO MUCH" TRAFFIC.

Parentheses appeared too infrequently (less than two percent of the papers contained them) to provide any reliable information on how adults used them.

Apostrophes caused problems, especially when they were used to indicate possession. The use was inconsistent, though, with examples such as this one appearing regularly (italics added):

Passage 5-15

I ALSO FEEL WE COULD USE OUR VALLEY'S HISTORICAL AND RURAL TRADITIONS FOR THE PUBLICS ENJOYMENT.

Low quality papers. Once again, the most commonly used punctuation mark was the comma, with papers typically containing about two of them. They appeared in salutations:

Passage 5-16

SIR,

and closings:

Passage 5-17

SINCERELY,

MR RESPONDENT

But otherwise, commas were used rarely. When they were, they were used to set off phrases similar to those in Passage 5-8 through 5-10, and in one of the most ambitious constructions, setting off a prepositional phrase.

Passage 5-18

IN REFERENCE TO THE NEW INTERCHANGE AT PRESENT, I FEEL THAT SUCH PLANS WOULD NOT BE DETRIMENTAL TO OUR VILLAGE.

Less ambitious comma constructions included:

Passage 5-19

FURTHER, THIS HIGHWAY WOULD CUT THE TRAVEL TIME TO OUR NEARBY COMMUNITIES BY ONE-HALF.

Occasionally, commas were included where they were not needed.

Passage 5-20

I FEEL THIS IS WHAT THE PEOPLE OF WINDSORVILLE, NEED . . .

More often, they were required but not used.

Passage 5-21

I LIKE MANY OTHERS FEEL THAT IT MIGHT INDANGER OUR CHILDREN AND PROPERTY AS WELL.

Other punctuation marks appeared very infrequently. Three-quarters of the papers contained no colons and almost all of the remaining letters used them in salutations. Semicolons appeared in only one in thirty letters, and the appearances were similar to Passage 5-13. Quotation marks and parentheses appeared less frequently than semicolons.

Apostrophes caused problems in the low quality papers. Often, they were used when they were not required:

Passage 5-22

ALL TOWN'S SHOULD MOVE AHEAD WITH THE TIMES . . .

and not used when they were needed:

Passage 5-23

I AM A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE AND CERTAINLY HAVE DEFINITE FEELINGS ABOUT THE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENTS PLANS.

Summarizing, the punctuation in the adult papers was generally simple. And while the high quality papers tended to show simple and inconsistent punctuation, the punctuation in the low quality papers was consistently rudimentary.

Capitalization

About three-fourths of both the high and low quality papers were completely free of capitalization errors.[8] In the high quality group, multiple errors appeared infrequently--only one paper in twenty-five had two or more capitalization errors. This was not true for the low quality group, over thirteen percent of which had two or more capitalization errors.

High quality papers. Because the errors occurred so infrequently, and because errors seemed to appear in isolation--most of the papers having capitalization errors had only one and all other attempts at capitalization were handled correctly--the judges concluded that capitalization was not a problem for the adults who wrote the high quality papers. The errors that were observed were attributed to handwriting (some respondents may have written lower case letters that looked like upper case letters, etc.) and oversights.

Low quality papers. Once again, many of the errors may have been due to handwriting style. Further, errors may have occurred because of omitted punctuation marks. Often, the adults who wrote these papers left out periods but capitalized the following word.

Finally, there were some individuals who appeared to lack any systematic notion of capitalization either correct or incorrect. In their papers, words seemed to be capitalized almost at random. The and various nouns usually were prime candidates in those papers.

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[8] See Appendix B for a description of capitalization errors.

Sentence Structure

Most of the papers were free of run-on sentences and sentence fragments.[9] Ninety-one and ninety-six percent of the low and high quality papers, respectively, had no sentence fragments, while eighty-eight and ninety-one percent of the low and high quality papers were free of run-ons.

High quality papers. The judges characterized the sentences in these papers as being loosely interrelated. Passages such as the following, for example, appeared regularly.

Passage 5-24

> PLANS TO BUILD AN INTERCHANGE ON THE EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITOL SHOULD BE RECONSIDERED. THE ORIGINAL PLAN WAS CONCEIVED TO ALLOW THE WINDSOR VALLEY TO REMAIN A RECREATION AREA AND OPEN SPACE FOR ESCAPTING THE OPRESSION OF THE CITY. SUCH OPEN SPACES ARE VITALLY REQUIRED FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELFARE OF URBAN INHABITANTS AS WELL AS AESTHETIC AND ECOLOGICAL REASONS. ONE OF THE MAIN ECOLOGICAL VALUES IS THE WATERSHED THE VALLEY PROVIDES. IF THE WINDSOR VALLEY WAS TO BECOME URBANIZED THE WATER ON WHICH THE CITY IS DEPENDENT WOULD BE DEMINISHED AND LIKELY POLUTED. ASIDE FROM THESE REASONS AGAINST THE NEWLY PROPOSED INTERCHANGE ARE PROBLEMS OF TRAFFIC FLOW. THE EXPRESSWAY WAS BUILT TO RELIEVE CONGESTION OF COMMUTERS AND WEEKEND BEACH EXCURSIONS BUT THE AMOUNT OF TRAFFIC STILL HAS A LIMIT CHANNELING TOO MUCH TRAFFIC ONTO THE EXPRESSWAY WILL ENDANGER THE SAFETY OF EXPRESSWAY DRIVERS AND CAUSE A BOTTLE-NECK IN THE TRAFFIC FLOW.

Notice that the arguments against the interchange are merely strung together, with no transitions or suggestions about the relative importance of the different reasons. This last point is particularly important, for unless we are told which of the arguments against the interchange is most compelling, we will have to assume that all are equally important to the writer. Without being told which arguments are related to each other, we cannot be faulted for believing that the respondent thought concerns for watershed, for instance,

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[9] For description of run-on sentences and sentence fragments, see Appendix B.

were unrelated to concerns about water pollution. In other words, the writer of this passage--being typical of many authors of high quality papers--had a problem with the coordination and subordination of ideas. Many adults who wrote the high quality papers did not qualify ideas by subordinating "sub-ideas" to them, with the result that by default, all ideas were presented as coordinates of one another.

Passage 5-24 is representative of the adult papers in another respect: the sentence structure in it is both simple and invariant. These papers contained slightly less than 6.8 sentences each, with declarative statements accounting for 6.7 of them. Only one paper in thirty contained a single question and one paper in forty had an exclamatory statement. Further, the sentences tended to be short; two-thirds of them were between five and twenty-three words in length.

The most complex constructions looked like these:

Passage 5-25

> WE CAME SPECIFICALLY TO BE IN THE COUNTRY, TO RAISE OUR CHILDREN IN A MORE HEALTHFUL SETTING THAN THAT FOUND IN THE PRESS OF THE CITY OR SUBURB.

Passage 5-26

> OUR SCHOOLS ARE GOOD, AND SURE, THEY COST US MONEY--OUR TAXES RISE EVERY YEAR, BUT IT IS MONEY WELL-SPENT, AND WE CAN SEE WHERE IT'S GOING.

The run-on sentences appearing in the high quality papers struck the judges as being punctuation problems rather than sentence problems; the adults seemed to know what sentences were. Most run-ons could be redeemed by moving commas, though semicolons and periods would occasionally be required. The run-ons usually looked like this.

Passage 5-27

> ALSO ALL SMALL TOWNS NEED A CHANGE, TO ME THIS IS WHY THEY ARE SO DRAB BECAUSE YOU SEE THE SAME PEOPLE AND PLACES ALL THE TIME, ALSO IF IT LOWERS THE TAX RATE IT WOULD BE WORTH IT FOR THIS REASON ALONE BECAUSE TAXES ARE FAR TOO HIGH NOW ESPECIALLY FOR LOWER & MIDDLE CLASS INCOMES.

The sentence fragments appearing in the high quality papers looked, to the judges, like attempts to write advertising copy. The judges felt that the adults who wrote sentence fragments were possibly emulating the clipped, terse advertising prose they see every day. In the passage which follows, notice how the fragment qualifies the assertion made in the sentence preceding it, as fragments often do in advertisements.

Passage 5-28

HOWEVER, BOTH PROBLEMS CAN BE ASSETS IF HANDLED CORRECTLY. NEW MONEY AND JOBS FOR OUR CITIZENS.

Low quality papers. Run-on sentences in the low quality papers were often punctuation problems rather than reflections of sentence structure difficulties. In other words, run-on sentences could often be saved with commas and semicolons. There were, though, many run-on sentences which needed to be broken up into several shorter sentences, and others reflecting problems in logic as well as problems with punctuation. Passage 5-29 is an example of the salvageable kind of run-on and Passage 5-30 is an example of a run-on containing logical errors.

Passage 5-29

I LIKE YOUR PLAN ON FOR THE NEW EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITAL I THINK THERE SHOULD BE CHANGES MADE FROM TIME TO TIME TO IMPROVE ROADS OR WHATEVER IT IS THAT NEED DOING.

Passage 5-30

SIR DO YOU REALIZE TERRIBLE TRAFFIC THE TERRIBLE OF CARS ARE ON THE ROAD TO DAY I FEEL THAT IT WILL LESS ACCIDENTS, AMOUNT OF TIME SAVE FOR WORKING PEOPLE.

Sentence fragments seemed to lack the logic found in the high quality papers. Indeed, they seemed to reflect the kind of logic found in Passage 5-30.

Passage 5-31

IS BETTER FOR PEOPLE A HUWAY. MORE DIRECTED FOR PEOPLE, AND MORE OPPORUNITY TO GO STREAT. AND MORE COMFORTABLE.

Clearly not all the low quality papers were limited to run-on sentences and sentence fragments. The correct sentences that did appear, though, tended to be very simple, following the most basic sentence patterns.

Passage 5-32

> I FEEL THAT THIS INTERCHANGE WOULD BE OF MUCH BENEFIT TO OUR TOWN. IT WOULD BRING IN NEW MONEY, PEOPLE AND GIVE US A REAL PLACE IN THE GROWTH OF OUR COUNTY. LIKE ONE GREAT MAN SAID "DO NOT ASK WHAT YOUR COUNTY CAN DO FOR YOU, BUT WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTY". THIS QUOT FITS OUR TOUN REAL WELL. WE MUST PUSH AHEAD.

This general simplicity of sentence structure is reflected in the length of the sentences, two-thirds of which were between eight and twenty-two words in length. Further, only one percent of the essays contained even a single question, and none of them used an exclamatory statement.

The most complex sentences looked like these:

Passage 5-33

> IN MY OPINION, WE CANNOT STOP PROGRESS. THIS EXPRESSWAY WOULD HELP PROMOTE HIGHER BUSINESS ADVANCEMENTS, MORE PEOPLE MOVING TO OUR SMALL COMMUNITY. THE ONLY POINT PEOPLE WOULD OBJECT TO WOULD BE HIGHER TAXES, AND YOU STATED THAT THE TAX RATE WOULD BE LOWER.

Awkward Constructions

Problems relating to awkwardness[10] appeared in forty-four percent of the low quality papers and thirty-five percent of the high quality papers. For both groups, awkwardness was often due to words or letters being left out (Passage 5-34) and problems in parallel constructions (Passage 5-35).

Passage 5-34

> INDUSTRY MIGHT BE INTICED AND INCOME FROM A STRONG TOURIST TRADE WOULD NOT ONLY HELP US BUT COUNTY AND STATE.

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[10] For description of awkward constructions, see Appendix B.

Passage 5-35

I REALIZE YOUR JOB IS TO IMPROVE THE COUNTRY AND TO BRING THINGS UP TO DATE BUT I PREFER THE OLD WAY OF LIFE AND NOT DESTROYING AN HISTORICAL WORK OF NATURE.

Finally, high and low quality papers showed many problems with prepositions. Examples like the following appeared regularly when writers requested a response to their letters:

Passage 5-36

HOPEING TO HEAR FOR YOU.

Agreement

Three-fourths of the low quality papers and better than eighty percent of the high quality papers were free of agreement errors.[11] Besides having fewer papers with no errors, the low quality group had more papers with multiple errors per paper. Three percent of the low quality papers had two or more agreement errors compared to one percent of the high quality papers.

High quality papers. The judges suggested that most of the agreement errors in these papers were probably due to oversights or carelessness. They identified unusually complex sentences that nevertheless displayed correct agreement. The following passage is exemplary. Notice that even though a rather elaborate development appears between the subject and the verb (which are underscored), they both agree with each other.

Passage 5-37

THE LACK OF PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY DISPLAYED BY YOU AND YOUR DEPARTMENT IN ACQUIESCING TO THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL TO THE INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENT AND SPECULATORS DEMONSTRATES A NEW "LOW" IN STATE GOVERNMENT.

Low quality papers. The agreement problems in the low quality papers, according to the judges, often reflected spoken language patterns. Often, the errors resulted from the omission of letters, such as the terminal D in DECIDED in the following passage.

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11 For description of agreement errors, see Appendix B.

Passage 5-38

AFTER SEEING THE OPEN LETTER THE MAYOR SENT YOU, I DECIDE TO EXPRESS MY OWN OPINION.

This same problem will be considered at greater length in the consideration of spelling errors.

Spelling and Word Usage

Thirty-nine percent of the papers were completely free of spelling errors and sixty-one percent of the papers were free of word choice errors.[12] These two error-free groups do not necessarily contain different papers; many of the papers with no misspellings were also free of word choice errors.

Errors of both types appeared with about equal frequency in the high and low quality papers, though low quality papers contained slightly fewer misspellings and slightly more word choice errors than the high quality papers.

Because the high quality papers were longer than the low quality ones, the number of different words in high quality letters was greater than in low quality ones. Typically, the better papers contained about sixty-four different words while the poorer ones contained about thirty-five.

High quality papers. The judges described the wording in these papers as being unusually good. They found adjectives and adverbs that were particularly precise, words like RAPID, ESSENTIALLY, HISTORIC, SELF-SERVING, and so forth, indicating to them that the people writing the letters had undoubtedly been influenced by their reading.

It is interesting to speculate about the kind of reading that might produce the vocabulary found in better papers. If we look to newspaper journalism, we find the same kind of concise though broadly based language found in these papers. It is possible that newspaper journalism has influenced the writing of young adults, but one cannot say for sure.

The spelling in the better papers did not quite keep pace with the wide-ranging vocabulary, though the misspellings were generally limited to uncommon words. Only three percent of the papers contained misspellings of common words while fifty-two percent contained misspellings of uncommon words.

Many of the misspellings were characterized by the judges as typographical. A word may have been misspelled through the omission of a letter, say, and the same word would be correctly spelled later on in the paper.

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[12] For description of spelling errors and word choice errors, see Appendix B.

Many of the non-typographical misspellings involved the letter i. Usually, i replaced other vowels when the vowels sounded like i's. Examples include BENIFIT, VILLIAGE, POSSIABLY, HORIZINS, and HERITIAGE.

Low quality papers. The judges said the vocabularies in the low quality papers seemed to be restricted. The adjectives were not nearly as precise as those in the high quality group, and all the words that might seem unusual or unique came from the stimulus materials--the instructions given to the adults for the exercise.

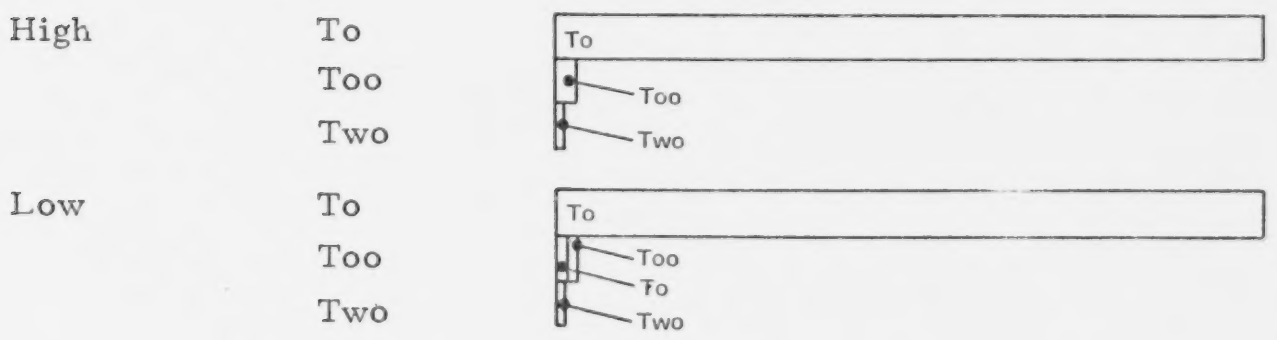
The spelling of common words was as good as in the high quality papers, and the spelling of uncommon words was better than in the higher quality letters, with sixty percent free of such misspellings. This is due in part to the restricted vocabulary (these papers contained fewer different words) and in part to the fact that many of the words the respondents used were displayed in the instructions for the exercise.

Many of the misspellings were related to speaking patterns, according to the judges. Verb endings were omitted and certain consonants that tend not to be pronounced were not written, and so forth. DECIDE in Passage 5-38 is a case in point.

Homonyms[13]

By and large, adults had relatively little difficulty choosing the correct homonym to use. Only the low quality papers showed any difficulty with to, too, and two, and that problem was limited to a few cases of using to in place of too.

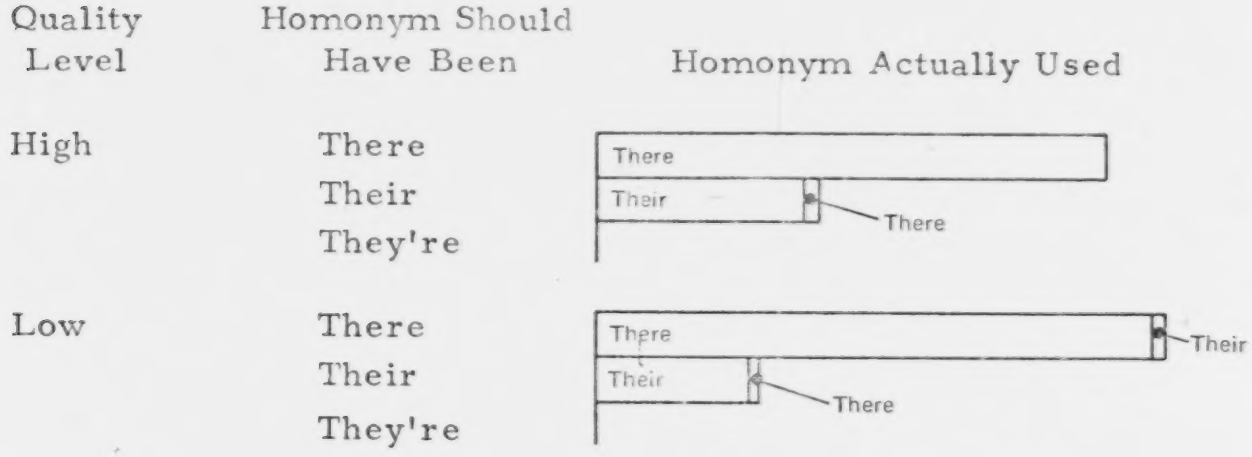
Figure 5-1: How to, too, and two were used in the Adult exercise letters. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym is used.



[13] See note, page 28.

Occasionally both high and low quality papers contained appearances of there when their was required, and in some of the poorer letters their was used when there should have been. But, on the whole, there, their, and they're caused no problems for the adults.

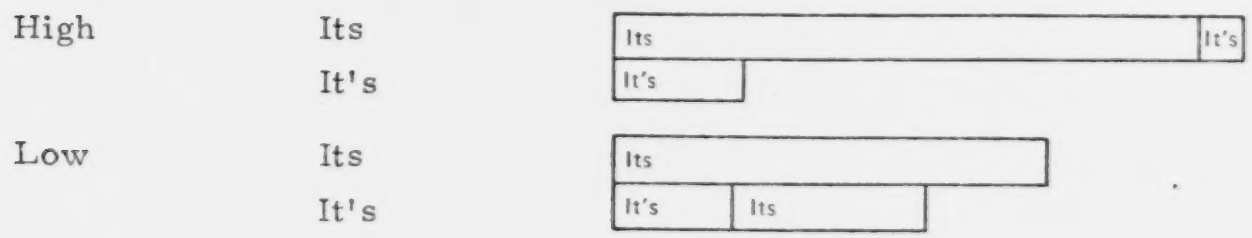
Figure 5-2: How there, their, and they're were used in the Adult exercise letters. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym is used.



Adults used its and it's only rarely in these papers. But when it's was required in the poorer papers, its occurred two-thirds of the time. On the other hand, there were no instances in these papers of persons using the contraction when the possessive was required.

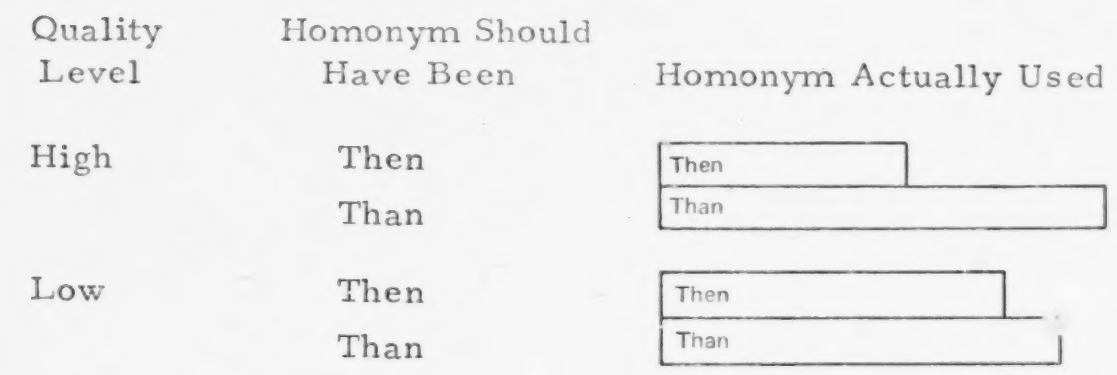
The opposite condition appeared in the high quality papers. While it's was invariably used when the contraction was required, it was also used on some occasions when the possessive its was needed.

Figure 5-3: How its and it's were used in the Adult exercise letters. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym is used.



Then and than caused no problems at all to any of the adults who wrote papers for the assessment. Then was invariably used when the temporal homonym was required, and than when the comparative was needed.

Figure 5-4: How then and than were used in the Adult exercise letters. The length of the bar is proportional to the number of times the homonym is used.



Summary

A large percentage of the adults who were asked to write letters refused to do so, though it is not clear whether their refusals were due to an unwillingness to write at all or a lack of interest in the exercise.

The judges suggested that the lack of motivation--for whatever reason--was carried over into some of the low quality papers. They were generally short and perfunctory, employing a limited sentence structure, a vocabulary that rarely went beyond function words and words used in the stimulus materials, and a rudimentary punctuation restricted to letter format conventions (e.g., commas or colons following the salutation).

The high quality papers tended to present a paradox. While the sentence structure, punctuation, and other elements, were generally limited, the vocabulary, especially with respect to adjectives and adverbs, was often sophisticated and generally very precise. A resolution of this paradox was suggested when the judges speculated that the paragraphing, which was also limited, seemed to follow a journalistic format, as if the respondents may have been influenced by news stories; and since newspaper copy tends to be composed of simple sentences with a minimal amount of punctuation and a precision of word choice, this suggestion seems plausible.

Table 5-1 - Statistics for Adults Commissioner Stroud exercise papers.

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors: Per 100 Words	Mean Errors: Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Paragraphing	Error Counts	Number of Paragraphing Errors	High	+ *	+ *	97	2	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
	Computer Analysis	Number of Paragraphs	High	4.1	4.1	0	8	18	23
			Low	6.1	3.2	0	18	25	30
		Mean Paragraph Length	High	**	2.0	Q_1 = 1.4		Q_3 = 2.7	
			Low	**	1.7	1.3		2.1	
Punctuation	Error Counts	Punctuation Errors	High	2.8	2.5	14	26	26	12
			Low	3.9	2.0	15	35	27	12
	Computer Analysis	Number of Commas	High	3.8	4.0	27	21	21	13
			Low	3.0	2.0	10	22	40	55
		Number of Colons	High	.4 *	.2 *	76	23	1	0
			Low	.3 *	.4 *	56	42	2	0
		Number of Semicolons	High	.1 *	.1 *	94	6	1	0
			Low	.1 *	.1 *	90	9	1	0

* Single stars indicate arithmetic means, otherwise they are trimeans (see Tukey, J., Exploratory Data Analysis, Limited Preliminary Edition, Addison-Wesley, 1970, p. 2-25).

** Double stars indicate values not reported because of inapplicability.

\+ A plus sign indicates a value greater than .00 and less than .05.

When much variability appears in the data, quartile values are reported: Q_1 is the 25th centile, Q_3 is the 75th centile.

Table 5-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Punctuation cont'd	Computer Analysis	Number of Quotation Marks	High	.1 *	.1 *	97	0	3	0
			Low	.1 *	.2 *	89	0	10	0
		Number of Parentheses	High	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	98	2	0	0
Capitalization	Error Counts	Number of Capitalization Errors	High	.7	.7	73	23	3	1
			Low	.9	.7	73	14	6	3
Sentence Structure	Error Counts	Sentence Fragments	High	.1 *	.1 *	96	4	1	0
			Low	.1 *	.1 *	91	9	1	0
		Run-on Sentences	High	+ *	.1 *	91	7	1	0
			Low	.1 *	.1 *	88	11	1	0
	Computer Analysis	Number of Declarative Sentences	High	7.1	6.8	Q_1 = 5.4		Q_3 = 8.2	
			Low	8.5	4.7	3.2		6.2	
		Number of Interrogative Sentences	High	+ *	+ *	99	1	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	96	2	1	0
		Number of Imperative Sentences	High	0 *	0 *	100	0	0	0
			Low	.1 *	+ *	98	1	0	0
		Mean Sentence Length	High	**	14.4	Q_1 =12.0		Q_3 = 17.6	
			Low	**	12.0	9.4		15.4	

Table 5-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors: Per 100 Words	Mean Errors: Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Sentence Structure	Computer Analysis	S.D. Sentence Length	High	**	8.9	Q_1 = 6.9		Q_3 = 11.5	
			Low	**	7.1	5.2		9.3	
	Error Counts	Awkward Constructions	High	.8	.8	65	27	6	1
			Low	1.1	.8	56	17	10	7
Agreement	Error Counts	Number of Agreement Errors	High	.6	.6	83	16	1	0
			Low	.8	.7	76	21	3	0
Spelling and Word Usage	Error Counts	Misspellings	High	1.6	1.5	Q_1 = 2.4		Q_3 = .6	
			Low	2.4	1.5	2.5		.7	
		Word Choice Errors	High	.8	.8	Q_1 = 1.3		Q_3 = .4	
			Low	1.0	.9	1.5		.4	
	Computer Analysis	Misspellings of Common Words	High	.1 *	+ *	96	4	0	0
			Low	+ *	+ *	98	1	0	0
		Misspellings of Uncommon Words	High	.9	1.1	Q_1 = .5		Q_3 = 1.9	
			Low	1.3	1.1	.5		2.0	
		Misspellings of Proper Nouns	High	.7	.8	70	23	6	1
			Low	.7	.7	65	24	9	1
		Mean Word Length	High	**	4.8	Q_1 = 4.5		Q_3 = 5.0	
			Low	**	4.5	4.2		4.8	

Table 5-1 continued

Reporting Categories	Analysis	Attribute	Essay Quality	Mean Errors Per 100 Words	Mean Errors Per Essay	% of Papers Having This Number of Occurrences: 0	1	2	3
Spelling and Word Usage cont'd	Computer Analysis	S.D. Word Length	High	**	2.7	Q_1 = 2.5		Q_3 = 2.9	
			Low	**	2.6		2.3		2.8
		Total Number of Words	High	**	89.7	Q_1 = 70.4		Q_3 = 110.0	
			Low	**	48.9		32.2		66.6
		Number of Different Words	High	73.0	65.5	Q_1 = 54.3		Q_3 = 78.8	
			Low	81.4	39.5		[illegible]		51.1

CHAPTER VI

The Differences Between 9's, 13's, 17's, and Adults

Introduction

In the preceding four chapters, we've considered the writings of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds, and adults, and identified the differences between higher, middle, and lower quality papers at each age. With such information at hand, there is a natural temptation to compare the accomplishments of each age group, and that is what this chapter attempts to do.

Challenges to the Validity of the Comparisons

A caveat is in order here. Even though there are differences between the age groups, it is not possible to say what accounts for them. In order to put the results of this report into a proper perspective, we should consider the following factors influencing the results in ways that make explanations of the differences hard to validate[1]:

1. History. Let's assume that we wish to know whether or not 17-year-olds write better than 13-year-olds because of their additional four years of experience (both scholastic and non-scholastic). Before we can say that observed differences are the result of additional years of experience, we must consider other possible explanations. One explanation, for example, has been called history: experiences not shared by both groups of teenagers (besides the four years of experience we are considering). In the case of these National Assessment results, history refers specifically to the fact that the experiences 13-year-olds have had are not necessarily the same as those 17-year-olds had when they were 13. In other words, 13- and 17-year-olds may not write

[1] These factors are spelled out in greater detail in Campbell, D. T., and Stanley, Julian C., Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research, Rand McNally and Co., Chicago, 1963.

with the same skill because the pre-13 experiences of both groups were different--not because 17-year-olds have had four years more experience. History becomes more important when comparisons are made involving greater age spreads, i.e., comparisons involving 9-year-olds and young adults. While it may be reasonable to believe that most 9-year-olds have been exposed to television during their first 9 years, for example, it is probably not as reasonable to assume the same thing for the young adults, who were between the ages of 26 and 35 when they wrote National Assessment exercises. It is not possible to determine to what degree the differences between the writings of adults and 9-year-olds is a result of the fact that 9-year-olds have been exposed to television earlier than young adults.

2. Maturation. Let's return to comparing the writings of 13- and 17-year-olds, and let's assume that history is not a problem--that both groups of teenagers had similar pre-13 experiences. Under these conditions, the differences between the two groups would be attributable to four years worth of experience. However, if we wished to attribute it to scholastic experience, we would be on shaky ground. There is no way to know how the writings of children change due to maturation (in this case, simply growing older) and not schooling. Some skills related to writing (such as thinking) simply improve with the passage of time. And it is difficult to separate those improvements from improvements due to schooling. In other words, it is not possible to look at the writing results contained in this report and say they show growth due to schooling; they may indeed show that, but they may also show improvement due to maturation.

3. Instrumentation. If we were to give children a spelling test, we would learn something about how they spell. If we were to have children write an essay and if we then checked the spelling in it, we would also learn something about how they spell. Yet the results from the two techniques would not be equivalent because the techniques themselves were so different. Similar--though less radical--differences exist when different exercises are used in the assessment.

   Three separate exercises were used in order to collect the papers reported in this volume. It is possible that the essays (and therefore the analysis results based on those essays) reflect differences in the exercises as well as differences in

the children who wrote the essays. It's possible, for example, that 9-year-olds might have written some other way (either better or worse) had they responded to stimuli other than a picture of a forest fire.

4. Reactive effects of experimental arrangements. All possible precautions have been taken to assure that the results of National Assessment exercises generalize to portions of the population of the United States (e.g., young adults). Unfortunately, the accuracy of the generalizations is sometimes impaired by the way the exercises are administered. It is possible--we don't know for sure--that respondents write differently (either better or worse) on their own than they do when they're writing as part of the assessment. In other words, the assessment conditions may cause people to respond differently than they would otherwise.

5. Mortality--applying only to adults in the assessment. The unfortunately chosen word mortality refers to people dropping out of the assessment. Of the 100 percent of adults who constituted the sample, 44 percent were mortalities. This high mortality rate means that the adult results may not be an accurate reading of the way all young adults write; but it is an accurate reading on the 56 percent who did participate.[2]

Now these limitations sound terribly constraining, and indeed they are. Taken together, they indicate that any explanations we offer of the differences between age groups must be tentative, and valid only insofar as the challenges we have considered allow them to be.

A Scale for Comparing Groups

In order to compare groups, we need to locate them on a scale in order to determine where they are in relation to one another. The scale used here is a very subjective one, one that has no numbers associated with it in any cardinal sense. The scale only has the property of ordinality; we can only say that groups are better or worse than one another, not how much more or less skilled each group is compared to the others.

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[2] Of the 56% who agreed to participate, 29% were unwilling to write a Commissioner Stroud letter (see page 103). This amounts to 16% of all young adults in the sample.

The lowest point on the scale is called the no mastery level. Papers appearing at this level contained errors involving the simplest writing conventions; the papers were laden with errors, the sentences attempted were extremely simple, and the vocabulary (when the words were recognizable) was very limited and imprecise. Minimal responses (i.e., one or two very simple sentences) also appeared at the no mastery level. (The logic here was that if the writers of the papers were capable of more sophisticated efforts, they would have produced them.[3])

The midpoint in the scale is the mastery of basics level. Groups of respondents falling at this point wrote papers having two attributes. First, they attempted only simple constructions (a minimal amount and variety of punctuation, and a simple, if slightly imprecise, vocabulary). Second, they made few, if any, errors. The errors that appeared were due either to carelessness (indicated by correctness in other parts of the paper) or, rarely, attempts at more complexity.

Papers approaching the mastery of basics level, but not quite reaching it, tended to show inconsistency. There were too many errors in the papers to allow calling the mistakes simple carelessness, yet there was enough proficiency under certain similar situations to suggest that the writers were aware of the conventions of writing.

The topmost point on the scale represents skillful handling of written language. If any group of respondents had written papers falling at this point, they would not have been limited to simple patterns and language. The papers--whether they contained sophisticated constructions or not--would suggest that the writers chose the constructions they used; the respondents would not have been forced to use them out of an inability to use others. The vocabulary would have been precise, indicating that the writers picked their words in order to convey the meaning they wished to convey.

Notice that there is no notion of goodness and badness built into this scale. It is not possible to say, for instance, that papers at any given point are either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Comparisons Between Groups

Figure 6-1. Figure 6-1 shows how the quality groups (higher, middle, and lower) at each age level related to each other on the scale just described.

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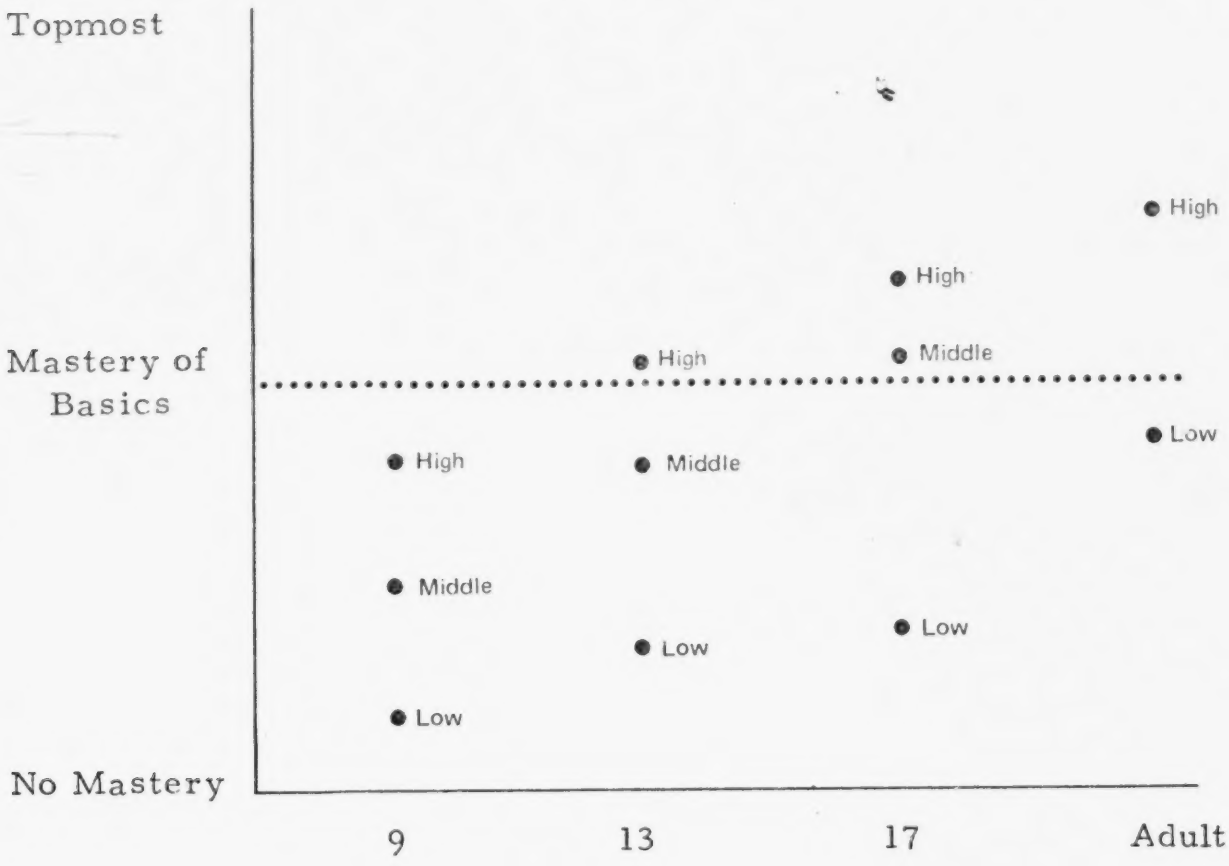
[3] The decision to include minimal responses and incoherent papers at the no mastery level follows from the particular holistic scoring procedures used to score the papers. The holistic procedures are described in Appendix A.

Groups at the same height are of equivalent general quality, while groups that are higher or lower are better or worse, respectively.

Figure 6-1: Relative positions of the quality groups for each age



No Mastery. Lower quality papers at ages 9, 13, and 17 fell at the no mastery level of the scale. At age 9, the lower quality papers are either extremely short or difficult to understand. In either event, they show very little grasp of even the simplest of sentence patterns and only the slightest command of vocabulary (i.e., the wording is very general and lacks precision). These passages exemplify both kinds of lower quality 9-year-old writing.

Passage 6-1

THERE IS A FOREST FIRE AND THE MOTHER AND THE BABY DEAR ARE IN THE RIVE TRYING TO GET AWAY:

Passage 6-2

HERE IS A BIG IS A FIAH. LOOK AT THAT FHTE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PEOPLE THAT WERE IN. THERE PEOPLE WHAT HAPPENED.

At age 13, sentences are a bit longer and run-on sentences appear more often, but the language is still very general. The biggest difference between these papers and the age 9 lower quality papers is the more conversational quality of the writing; the children seem to be writing less hesitantly and recording oral language patterns, though they have mastered few of the conventions of writing.

Passage 6-3

I ADMIRE HELEN KELLER SHE WAS DEAF & BLIND AND STILL ALWAYS WANTED TO HELP BLIND & DEAF PEOPLE EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS DEAF & BLIND. SHE SHOWED TO PEOPLE THAT SHE COULD LEAD A NORMAL LIFE JUST LIKE YOU AND I. AND SHE WOULD HELP SHOW PEOPLE JUST BECAUSE THERE BLIND AND DEAF THEIR STILL HUMAN BEINGS. I ADMIRE HER BECAUSE SHE HAS SUCH COURAGE TO GO THROUGH TO END IN HELPING PEOPLE.

Lower quality age 17 papers maintain the conversational quality of the age 13 papers, display the same small and non-specific vocabulary found in age 13 papers, and reflect confusion about punctuation, sentence structure and the like.

Passage 6-4

I WOULD LIKE TO BE JAMES BROWN BECAUSE HE IS A SOUL MAN AND I AM A SOUL KIT HE CAN MAKE ABOUT 10,000 DOLLOE A NIGHT OR MAKE ABOUT 20,000 DOLLOE A RECORD. I THINK JAME IS WHERE IT AT. I AM GOING TO BE A MAN JUST LIKE MR JAMES BROWN.

Inconsistent Papers. Four groups of papers qualified as inconsistent (middle and higher 9's, middle 13's, and lower adults), though one group--the middle quality 9's--was distinctly less good than the other three.

The middle quality 9's showed many of the same errors and correct usages as the other groups, though the papers tended to be shorter. It is the more frequent appearance of errors that makes these papers different from the other inconsistent papers.

Passage 6-5

ONE DAY THE FOREST WAS VERY HOT. THEN A BEAR WENT TO SEE WHY IT WAS SO HOT. THEN HE SAW FLAMES GROING IN FRONT OF HIM. THEN HE WENT BACK TO WARN EVERY BODY AND. THEY ALL RAN FOR THE RIVER. AND THEY WHERE ALL RIGHT.

Characteristically, higher quality 9's were simple in nature, containing a few flaws. The following example is typical.

Passage 6-6

THERE WAS A FOREST FIRE IN THE FOREST. MOTHER AND HER BABY DEER ARE CROSSING THE RIVER TO GET AWAY FROM THE FIRE. WHILE THEY WERE GOING THE FIRE WAS SPREDING.

FOLOWING BEHIND WERE THE REST OF THE ANIMALS THEN A HUNTER CAME AND SAW THE FIRE AND GOT HELP. THAN THE ANIMALS WERE SAVED BY A HUNTER.

Middle quality age 13 papers were longer than the higher quality 9's, but they were still consistently simple and error ridden.

Passage 6-7

ABE LINCOLN WAS A PIONEER WITH A LOT OF COURAGE TO FACE THE WILDERNESS. HE BUILT A CABIN IN THE FOREST. LATER HE GOT MARRIED BUT SOON THIS WIFE PASSED AWAY FROM SICKNESS. SO THEY MOVED AND HE SOON GOT MARRIED AGAIN. ABES FAMILY WAS A BIG ONE, HE CAME FROM A BIG FAMILY ANYWAYS.

The same simplicity of sentence structure, punctuation, and vocabulary reappears in the lower quality adult papers. (The sample included below is shorter than the examples included so far because the lower quality adult letters tended to be short.)

Passage 6-8

ONLY I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK OF THE COLONIAL PAST THAT WOULD BE DASTROIED. ANY TIME A THING LIKE THIS TAKES PLACE I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT THE CHANGE IS BAD!

Mastery of Basics Papers. Higher quality 13's, higher and middle quality 17's, and higher quality adult papers all qualified at or above the mastery of basics level. The difficulties in these papers were related to the things their authors didn't do; they had the basic conventions mastered, but did not depart from them (with the possible exception of the higher quality adults' papers). Notice that when errors appear in these papers, they are probably due to carelessness or attempts at complexity beyond the simplicity of the rest of the paper.

Passage 6-9 (a higher quality age 13 paper)

> JAMES CAGNEY IS MY FAVORITE BECAUSE OF HIS STYLE AND BUILD AS A MOVIE ACTOR. I LIKE MOST OF HIS ROLES IN THE MOVIES AND ON TELEVISION IN WHICH HE MOSTLY PLAYS A GANGSTER. I FIND JAMES CAGNEY A FASINATING PERSON. IN EVERY PICTURE I SEE OF HIM I'M ON HIS SIDE WHETHER HE'S GOOD OR BAD. I'M MOST FACINATED BY THE WAY HE TALKS IN THE MOVIES, HIS LANGUAGE IS SO COMMANDING I OFTEN TRY TO IMITATE IT MYSELF SOMETIMES I DON'T DO A VERY GOOD JOB.

Passage 6-10 (a middle quality age 17 paper)

> I ADMIRE MY BROTHER BECAUSE OF HIS COURAGE IN THE HOME HE LIVES IN AND THE WAY HE MAKES HIS DECISSIONS. WHEN HE SAYS HE'S GOING TO DO SOMETHING HE DOESN'T LET ANYTHING STOP HIM. IN A WAY HE'S COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT AND IN ANOTHER WAY HE IS TERRABLY INSECURE. HE'S THE KIND OF PERSON YOU CAN TALK TO ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM AND CAN TRUST WHEN YOU HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS THAT YOU NEED SOME ANSWERS ON.

Passage 6-11 (a higher quality age 17 paper)

> I GREATLY ADMIRE BOB HOPE FOR HIS OUTSTANDING PERSONALITY AND HIS COURAGE. HE IS A GREAT ENTERTAINER AND TRIES TO PLEASE HIS PUBLIC AS BEST HE CAN. HIS FREQUENT TRIPS TO VIETNAM AND OTHER DISTANT MILITARY POSTS REVEAL HIS COURAGE. HE KNOWS THAT THERE IS DANGER OF BEING HURT OR EVEN KILLED WHEN HE SCHEDULES HIS SHOWS FOR THE MEN MOST DEPRIVED OF CIVILIZED COMFORTS; THE

MEN DEEPEST IN THE CONFLICT. THERE IS ALWAYS A DANGER OF A AIR-RAID, BUT HE GOES BACK FOR SHOW AFTER SHOW. MANY OF HIS SHOWS ARE PUT ON UNDER IMPOSSIBLE CONDITIONS, BUT HE STILL MAKES THEM HIS BEST. I BELIEVE HE IS, INDEED, A CREDIT TO HIS PROFESSION.

This last paper began to show one of the earmarks of the high quality adult papers--a wide-ranging, precise vocabulary. There are words in the other samples that show the relationship these papers bear to the high quality adult letters--the words FASINATING and COMMANDING in the 13-year-old paper, for example. In considering the example of high quality adult writing in the following passage, notice both the vocabulary and the simplicity of sentence structure and punctuation.

Passage 6-12

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD,

I AM IN FAVOR OF THE NEW INTERCHANGE AT WINDSOR-VILLE. IT WOULD CREAT NEW AND BETTER BUSINESSES IN OUT TOWN. IT WOULD BRING IN NEW PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS AND GIVE OUR TOWN THE NEW LIFE WE HAVE LONG NEEDED.

IT WOULD ALSO CREAT PROBLEMS SUCH AS TRAFFIC AND LOSS OF TRADITION. HOWEVER, BOTH PROBLEMS CAN BE ASSETS IF HANDLED CORRECTLY. NEW MONEY AND JOBS FOR OUR CITIZENS.

PLEASE VOTE YES FOR THE INTERCHANGE.

SINCERELY,

MR RESPONDENT

It's apparent that there are similarities in the papers written by children, teenagers, and young adults. These similarities suggest that the lower quality papers written by 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, and 17-year-olds, for example, are very much alike. Similarly, the higher and middle quality papers by 9-year-olds were not unlike the middle quality 13-year-old essays and the lower quality adult papers. These four groups of papers, of course, were better than the three groups described earlier. The best papers, the papers showing a mastery of basic writing conventions, were written by 13-year-olds (the higher quality papers), by 17-year-olds (higher and middle quality papers), and by half of the adults (the high quality adult papers).

It's tempting to speculate about these differences--to wonder, for example, why adult writing is better than 17-year-old writing even though so many adults do not continue their educations past high school. The explanations that can be produced are only speculative; there is no way that the data and conclusions described in this volume can be used to explain why groups of writers are where they are relative to one another.

What we have here is a black box. We know about the things that come out of the box--the essays described in this report--but we have very little information about the kinds of things that went into the box and the events that took place inside.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Procedures for Assigning Overall Quality Scores

The four exercises used in the writing mechanics analyses required the children and young adults to write in response to some stimulus, such as a picture of a forest fire (9-year-olds), or a proposal for construction of a highway interchange (Adults). The method used for scoring the overall quality of the responses is called holistic scoring, a method using trained readers to read an essay, form an overall impression about its quality--grammar, word choice, creativity, expression of ideas, depth of thought, whatever--and assign it a score according to a previously established scale. The particular holistic scoring procedures used for National Assessment exercises were developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) which worked with the Measurement Research Center (MRC) in the scoring of all papers.

Responses for Adults and 17-year-olds were read in the same three-day session in the fall of 1969; those for 13's were read at a session in early April, 1970, and for 9's, at the end of April, 1970.

At each session, four persons supervised the scoring operation, two representatives from ETS, a representative from MRC, and a chief reader. Under the chief readers were a number of experienced readers, called table leaders, each of whom was responsible for groups of from five to ten readers.

The two ETS and one MRC supervisory persons met some days before each of the scoring sessions to read a sample of responses for each exercise at the given age level. From a reading of a number of papers, these readers established a scale which described papers ranging from those which showed the poorest quality response to those which showed the highest quality response. The scale used numbers from "1", indicating the poorest quality, to "8", indicating the highest quality.[1] A "0" was assigned papers which were blank or in some way indicated the respondent had not attempted to write anything.

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[1] A 5-point scale was used for 9-year-olds since the range of quality in their papers was less than in papers written by older respondents.

This scale was established by the three supervisory people independently reading the sample of papers and evaluating them. Papers receiving the same score from all three persons were called range finders and were set aside for use in training table leaders and readers. Characteristically, such papers were assigned even numbered values--2, 4, 6, and 8. Papers on which there was no consensus were also set aside for training purposes.

During a scoring session, the supervisory personnel first spent about a half-day with the table leaders training them to use the scale for each exercise. Training was initiated by distributing copies of some of the range finders, but with their scores removed. The range finders were independently scored by the table leaders; a discussion followed to clarify why each paper was representative of a given scale point, and to identify those characteristics of the paper which accounted for it. If the table leaders were unable to agree with the chief reader and ETS personnel about the score assigned one or more of the range finders, these range finders were no longer used as training devices.

When the table leaders' training was completed, another half-day was spent repeating the training procedures with the readers. During the course of the actual scoring sessions, additional sample papers were distributed to the readers, assigned a score, and discussed to reconfirm that the scoring procedures being used remained constant over the entire course of the scoring session.

Each paper in the sample was read by two readers, and the sum of the scores they assigned was taken as the score for that paper. The readers read and assigned their scores independently, that is, without knowing the score given by the other reader, so that a lack of agreement between the two could occur. Table leaders periodically checked the scoring done and discussed the scores with the readers when discrepancies of more than one point were found. Occasionally discrepancies had to be resolved by one of the supervisory personnel.

Quality was never defined by any specific set of criteria; papers were assigned scores indicating quality relative to the other papers in the sample. A 4 paper, for example, can be said to be better than a 2 and not as good as a 6. But the fact that the paper received a 4 says nothing specific about the paper's punctuation, sentences, capitalization, agreement, paragraphing, or wording.

APPENDIX B

Kinds of Errors Sought in the Error Count Analysis

Two National Assessment staff members reviewed a list of errors commonly made in children's writings. From the list they selected categories that would adequately cover the majority of problems the essays might contain. The list was forwarded to the contractor who performed the error count analysis--the Measurement Research Center (MRC), a division of Westinghouse Learning Corporation.

The judges who actually performed the error count analysis were trained to look for the following kinds of errors:

A. Punctuation

1. Commas. Because there are few rigid rules about comma use, scorers were hesitant to mark comma errors except in cases when very obvious mistakes were made. Commas were required:

   a. to prevent confused or ambiguous meaning, or to mark definite breaks in a sentence.

      "Her father Frank Sinatra is also a good actor."

      "Mr. Stroud I believe you will take the proper ways of taking care of the matter."

   b. to separate two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor).

      "Progress and growth are fine but if I preferred living in a larger city I wouldn't have choose Windsorville for my home."

      "He got them to a shore on a piece of wood and a wounded man he carried on his back."

c. to separate a long subordinate clause preceding an independent clause.

"By starting this great task of bringing complete equality to men Mr. King has done a great thing."

"From the material I have read on the subject it will allow more people to see our valley and help our businesses."

d. to separate elements in a series (comma acceptable but not required to separate the last two elements if "and" is present) and to separate some compound modifiers.

"There record for the season is 9 wins 0 ties 0 losses."

"In his acting he has played many many scary parts."

e. to separate elements in dates, places and addresses.

"Peter Rose was born in Cincinnati Ohio."

f. comma placed where it shouldn't be.

"He looks honest and he is still trying, to get peace over our country."

"It was a very, long night."

"If I were there I shoot the buck, and skin it."

2. Colons were required to indicate a following series, to follow the greeting in a business letter, or to rephrase a statement made in the first part of the sentence. In the adult item (letter to Commissioner Stroud) either a comma or a colon was accepted following the greeting, since the letter could be interpreted as either a business or a friendly letter.

Semi-colons were required for separation of two independent clauses not connected by a conjunction, before a conjunctive adverb in the middle of a sentence, or to separate elements in a series when a comma was used in one or more of the elements.

"There are many such valleys throughout the United States that many people would one; like to live in, and two like to work in."

3. Periods were required at the end of every declarative sentence and after most abbreviations. Periods were seldom used and not required for commonly accepted abbreviations such as JFK, USA, and NFL.

"I don't care."

"But if you could see the forest now its not beautiful anymore."

"Dear Mr Stroud,"

"Dear Commissioner Stroud."

"The roads are to Jan the way it is. now,"

"T W Carpenter"

4. Quotation marks were required for enclosing direct quotations and titles (except books). For slang expressions quotation marks were usually accepted but not required. An individual judgment was made in each case.

"Ever since Dark Shadows came on I have watched it every day."

5. Question marks, exclamation marks, ellipses, dashes and parentheses were usually accepted where written except in definitely wrong places. One error occasionally encountered was the omission of the second part of a parentheses.

"How did the forest fire start."

6. Hyphens breaking a word at the end of a line in the wrong place were scored as punctuation errors.

B. Spelling errors were difficult to define. Some errors could be interpreted as either spelling errors or wrong word choice.

The ampersand (&) was not accepted for scholastic writing. Numbers below 100 were required to be written out except in special cases (7'2", 37 points in the game, 3:30, numbers as parts of dates or addresses, and numbers for points to be made in a sentence). Abbreviations were not allowed except for commonly accepted cases: TV, JFK, WWII, etc.

"And the anlmas in runing away from it."

"If you could unstaund about it Thang you"

"My family and I lived in Windsorville for 17 years."

"War did not stop him and his greatness cont."

"If the building of the road would bring in commerce & industry, I might support the road."

C. Capitalization was required at the beginning of every sentence, for proper nouns and titles, for pronouns referring to God or Jesus, for names of specific offices, for directions referring to a part of the country, for names of months, days, and holidays. Some students capitalized every word in their essays. In these cases no errors were marked, since the capitalization was considered to be a part of their handwriting style.

"he is not just best in baseball but helps people and he can face crippling people"

"all of a sudden a flame went up"

"There we can go confression and recive the blood and body of god."

"but thank god for the screan it stoped the fire"

"I would be against the new Interchange Because of additional taxes."

"He showed skill when he saved his men after being wrecked by a Japanese Destroyer."

"There is trees and fire is Burning Them up."

D. Errors of agreement included all situations in which there was no agreement in gender, number, case or tense, and in which parts of sentences were not parallel. Examples of typical agreement errors:

"There was two big deer in the water."

"He live with his family."

"I wish I could act as good as her on T. V. shows and in movies."

"One day me and my father went campen."

"One day someone did not put out their campfire."

"All the animals were save."

"If you could see how some one ruined that beautiful forest you will almost cry."

"When ever Mickey Mantle hit and make a home run his fans would jump up and cheer for him."

"Man's best way to accept change is to use and direct it rather than fighting it."

"He had much trouble in building the canal because there were land slides, cave-ins, the heat and there wasn't very many men to help build it."

"He has good quality, he is faithfully to some worth things and he also has faith."

"They built another one and lived happy ever after."

"Some people think a mag is an gear, but it is a wheel."

"An firest fire"

"I feel there should be a interchange in Windsorville."

E. Sentence fragments were marked as errors for phrases which were deliberately separated for emphasis (He did it wrong. All wrong.). This situation rarely occurred.

"Or make a living by some kind of sports such as baseball, weight lifting and other sports."

"Before it got biger."

"New money and jobs for our citizens."

F. Sentence run-ons consisted of several thoughts running endlessly on, two separate thoughts in the same sentence (without adequate transition), or two independent clauses separated by a comma but no conjunction. This category took precedence over punctuation and awkward construction, since all run-on sentences could be considered punctuation errors or awkward construction.

"The large forest is burning the trees and the deer are crossing the big river and the wind is blowing hard the river is running fast and there is a coon on a rock and the water is deep there are a lot of rocks in the big river there are some big trees burt up."

"We hope your project goes through, It will mean much to our city."

"He showed his honestest when young when he worked in a store and a women came in and bought something, he give her change for the amount she had given him, then she left."

G. Awkward construction is a broad category best described by the title. Some examples of errors fitting in this category are listed below.

1. misplaced or dangling modifiers

"Instead of being modernized or commercialized I think it would be of greater value to preserve one historical heritage of such places as Windsorville."

2. this, they or it with no definite reference

"Planning The Highway Interchange would be a good idea if They opposed it to where it wouldn't interfere with rural traditions."

"He was a methodist minister but he didn't like how they treated the depressed people."

3. incomplete or incorrect expressions

"I hope to become as a great basketball player as he is."

"Probably a little bit backward at time, but I like our town as is."

4. sentences that do not make sense (unless a specific error is detected)

"The interchange will permit greater traffic flow in and out one city."

"I like Charles Steinmetz because he was determined & didn't what people said."

"I guess because he loved baseball so much must be the reason for him to go on as far as he did."

"and a reindeer is in the water with her mother try to get over the other side."

H. Faulty paragraphing was not marked in equivocal cases. When a paragraph contained discussion of two separate ideas or when every sentence began a new paragraph, this error was marked. In this category as in the others, an error was marked for each time it occurred. A student who wrote five sentences that should have been in one paragraph instead of five, was given four errors in paragraphing.

I. Wrong word choice. The scorers spent much time in the training sessions discussing whether or not certain word choice mistakes should be counted as spelling errors or as wrong word choices. These errors were called wrong word choices, since there was no way of knowing whether the student did not know the difference between the two words, or whether he knew the right word but misspelled it. The judges did not consider it proper to guess what was in the student's mind, since there was no way of being sure. In general, combinations of letters which did not form a word were considered spelling errors, and combinations of letters which did form a word were considered wrong word choices. Below are some examples.

1. obvious cases (such as the use of "between" instead of "among", "could of" instead of "could have", etc.)

   "Some day a forest fire stated and all the animals had to run so they won't get burnt."

   "I does not seem it would harm the town's historical appearance for it would be on the outskirts of town."

   "He has only to hope the someone will have the courage to take up where he left off and fulfill his dream."

2. wrong verb ("sit" instead of "set", etc.)

   "He tolled his mother the truth."

3. apostrophe cases in which the group of letters used is a word

   "Presdient Nixons business is all work."

   "Its a Big Forest and a lots of water."

4. possible spelling errors in which the group of letters is a word

   "All they animals are trying to get to the other side."

   "He went part way through his life a a burgerler."

   "And heres were he became popular."

   "I thank that one Road should go though."

   "They have to exciting quarterbacks, not to mention an offensive and defensive line."

The judges were trained to locate the errors just described by examining essays and discussing the errors they contained. The training essays included the following. (Handwritten letters refer to errors described in this appendix.)

This essay was written in response to the forest fire exercise.

This is a story is about forset The aniems is in The water
The is cold and The aniems is in side of it and There is trees
and fire is Burneing Them up The aniems are nice aniems and
There rocks There is a Mother deer and a Baby deer its a Big
forset and a lots of Water

This essay was written in response to the famous person exercise.

John F. Kennedy becuse he new what he was doing. He spent the goverments money wisly. He tried to do many things to help the United States. He didn't show of to much. He didn't go every were to meat people insted he went to meetings and things like that. He did go to meet people some times and it was for a cause. He was trying to stop the war in Veatnam. I think he made a good President of the United States. In know many people looked up to him for help. He tried to clean up the slums. Many of these things he could not finise becuse of his death. He tried hard in every thing he did.

This essay was written for the Commissioner Stroud exercise.

Commissioner:

As a long time resident of Windsor ville, I would like to stress my disaproval of the interchange proposed for my village. I feel the only people to benifit from such a proposal would be the merchants of the city. I settled here to enjoy the unconjested atmos phere and would like for the spot to stay the same. Since there are numerous ways to get to the Capital there is no reason to direct unwanted traffic this way solely for business purposes.

Remember that these essays are included as examples used to train the judges. They are not necessarily typical of the essays written by children and young adults.

Appendix C

Characterizations

Because the error counts made on the papers were expected to provide a limited and misleading picture of the writing samples, several "characterization" conferences were held. At each of these conferences, various authorities in the field of writing and linguistics examined representative sets of papers at each quality level. Generally, every fourth paper in the set of essays at each quality level was examined.

The experts looked at the same categories examined during the error counts: punctuation, spelling, capitalization, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, agreement, paragraphing, word choice, and spelling. However, instead of counting errors, the experts described the papers in terms of each error category. They indicated, for example, what the punctuation in higher quality 9-year-old essays revealed about the children: they described the kinds of punctuation marks the children used, and the contexts in which they used them; they noted errors, and speculated about why the errors might have appeared, described correct usages, and suggested reasons why those usages appeared and others did not. In other words, they provided a considerable amount of information that did not appear in the error counts of the same aspects of writing.

Characteristics of this sort provided a good deal of new information about the writings of the children and young adults who responded to the National Assessment exercises. The information does not, however, reveal why higher quality papers were higher quality, and why lower quality papers were lower quality; the information only indicates that there are differences between groups. The reasons that papers were declared to be of higher and lower quality could be identified only at the time the papers were scored.

For example, while the judges did not count the words in each paper, such a count could be used to distinguish good papers from poorer ones. Specifically, the longest papers happened to be the best. Yet this relationship (between length and quality) is accidental; it is not a characteristic specifically used to score the papers. This example of the relationship between length and quality serves to indicate the danger in assuming that the attributes described by the experts are the attributes causing papers to be of one quality level or another. They may be, but they may also be accidents.

Appendix D

Computer Scoring of Essays

Each of the essays at the three levels of quality was keypunched on computer cards precisely as the respondent had written it, preserving all errors. The cards were then examined by the IBM 360/91 at Princeton University using an Assembly Language program called Son of MOMSR. Output from the program included a series of measures relating to various aspects of writing.[1] These measures were used to back up the descriptions made by the expert judges and, in some cases, the error counts.

For example, if the judges had indicated that the sentences in a particular group of papers tended to be short and simple, reference to the computer output for that same group of papers would usually produce confirming information--specifically, the mean and standard deviation of sentence length for those papers would be small. Similarly, if the sentences were simple, the computer output would have indicated the papers contained few colons and semicolons, few question marks and exclamation points.

The computer provided only limited confirmation of error count information. Specifically, it identified obvious misspellings, that is, words that would be declared to be misspelled if they were seen out of context. Whitch is an example of an obvious misspelling, while witch in the sentence "Witch do you like?" is not an obvious misspelling.

Since the computer was provided with a list of the obvious misspellings in the papers of common words, proper nouns and uncommon words, it was able to check the words in each essay against the entries on the list. Every time an obvious misspelling was located, the paper containing it was credited with a misspelling by the computer. Thus the obvious misspellings in a paper accounted for a portion of the misspellings identified in the error counts.

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[1] For a description of the aspects of writing measured by the computer, see Slotnick, H.B., "Toward a Theory of Computer Essay Grading," Journal of Educational Measurement (In press, expected publication date: Winter, 1972).

The aitributes of each paper examined by the computer included:

1. Number of different words in the essay
2. Total number of words in the essay
3. Mean word length in letters
4. Standard deviation of word length in letters
5. Total number of sentences
6. Number of declarative sentences
7. Number of interrogative sentences
8. Number of imperative sentences
9. Mean sentence length in words
10. Standard deviation of sentence length in words
11. Number of paragraphs
12. Mean paragraph length in sentences
13. Standard deviation of paragraph length in sentences
14. Relative pronouns
15. Head position gerunds
16. Head position adverbs
17. Head position past participles
18. Number of colons
19. Number of semicolons
20. Number of parentheses
21. Number of quotation marks
22. Obvious misspellings of common words[2]
23. Obvious misspellings of proper nouns
24. Misspellings of uncommon words[3]

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[2] A common word is any word appearing at least once every two papers.

[3] Uncommon words appeared less than once every two papers.

Appendix E

The tables below present the following information:

1. Sample Number. These figures represent the actual number of papers in the complete distribution and in each of the three groups of papers excerpted for characterization and computer analysis.

2. Sample Range. These figures delimit the overall quality range for each group. For instance, the overall quality scores for papers in the 9-year-old Lower Quality group ranged from about the second percentile to the twenty-seventh; higher quality 13-year-old papers ranged from about the seventy-second percentile to the eightieth, and so on.

3. Percent of Sample. These figures reveal the percent of papers that were selected from the total number for Higher, Middle, or Lower groups. For instance, the papers selected as Higher Quality 9-year-old essays represented 13.8% of the total number of 9-year-old essays in our sample.

*4. Population Range. These figures indicate what percentile spread in a national population our sample range represents. In other words, the sample percentile range for 9-year-old Middle Quality papers (37.8 - 65%), when projected to a national population of 9-year-olds, represents a range from about the thirty-fifth percentile to about the sixty-fourth.

*5. Percent of population. These figures indicate what percentage of a national population our sample percentages represent. For instance, the number of papers excerpted from the 17-year-old essays as Higher Quality papers amounted to 7.9% of our sample; in a national population, they represent 6.5% of all 17-year-olds.

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*Note: The sample percentages differ slightly from the population percentages because the assessment oversampled certain minority groups in order to give them adequate representation. For a detailed explanation of National Assessment sampling procedures, see the "Sampling" appendix in NAEP Reports 3 or 5.

	Sample Number	Sample Range (Percents)	Percent of Sample	Population Range (Percents)	Percent of Population
9-year-olds					
Complete Distribution	2370	0-100	100	0-100	100
Higher Quality	327	65.0-78.8	13.8	63.7-78.0	14.3
Middle Quality	644	37.8-65.0	27.2	34.8-63.7	28.9
Lower Quality	580	2.4-26.9	24.5	1.8-23.6	21.8
Totals	1551		65.5		65.0
13-year-olds					
Complete Distribution	2355	0-100	100	0-100	100
Higher Quality	182	72.2-79.9	7.7	69.1-78.1	8.9
Middle Quality	242	44.0-54.3	10.3	40.3-50.3	10.0
Lower Quality	144	12.3-18.4	6.1	9.7-15.5	5.8
Totals	568		24.1		24.7
17-year-olds					
Complete Distribution	2212	0-100	100	0-100	100
Higher Quality	174	76.0-83.9	7.9	78.0-84.4	6.5
Middle Quality	282	33.6-46.3	12.7	39.0-52.5	13.5
Lower Quality	112	5.3-10.4	5.1	9.6-15.2	5.6
Totals	568		25.7		25.6
Young Adults					
Complete Distribution	782	0-100	100	0-100	100
Higher Quality	209	60.6-100	39.4	68.8-100	31.2
Lower Quality	321	0-60.6	60.6	0-68.8	68.8
Totals	530		100		100

Appendix F

Following are the very best essays or letters written at each age level.

Age 9

22. 04549

THE FIRE

WATCH OUT! RUN! IT IS A FOREST FIRE. MANY ANIMALS ARE TRYING TO CROSS THE STREAM. BUT THEY MAY BE CARRIED DOWN THE SWIFT CURRENT. SEE THOSE TWO DEER IN THE RIVER? THEY MAY DROWNED. A RACCOON IS STUCK ON A ROCK. HE HAS BEEN DRIVEN FROM HIS HOME. IF IT IS A FEMALE, THE RACOON'S BABYS MAY BURN TO DEATH. THE FIRE WILL STOP AT THE EDGE OF THE STREAM, BUT MANY ANIMALS MAY LOSE THEIR LIVES TRYING TO SWIM THE RIVER. AND WHAT ABOUT THE ANIMALS STILL IN THE FOREST? THEY MAY DIE BECAUSE THEY ARE TRAPPED, WOUNDED. CAN YOU BE MORE CAREFUL? THE REASON THAT THE FIRE IS IN THE FOREST IS BECAUSE SOMEBODY WAS CARELESS. THEY STARTED THE FIRE. THEY ARE THE MAIN CAUSE. YOU CAN HELP THESE FOREST ANIMALS BY BEING CAREFUL WITH YOUR CAMP FIRE. ALWAYS REMEMBER, "ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES." KEEP THIS IN MIND WHEN YOU START A CAMPFIRE. IT MAY BE A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH.

Age 9

22. 06389

THE FOREST FIRE

ONE DAY MY FAMILY AND I WERE GOING ON A PICNIC. WE SAW FOUR LITTLE BOYS RUNNING AROUND AND THROWING LIGHTED MATCHES. ONE BOY TRIED TO THROW ON AT A SQUIRREL BY HE MISSED AND THE TREE STARTED ON FIRE. WE TRIED TO PUT THE FIRE OUT BUT IT WOULDN'T WORK. SO WE GATHERED SOME ANIMALS TO SAVE THEIR LIVES. BUT THE LITTLE BOYS WERE TRAPPED THEY COULDN'T GET OUT. IT WAS TO LATE TO SAVE THEM AND SO THE WERE TRAPPED. POEPLE SHOULD NEVER PLAY WITH MATCHES IT CAN KILL LIVES. AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT TRAGITY.

22. 22864

THE FOREST FIRE

THERE WAS ONCE A FIRE BUG THAT WAS THE MEANEST FIRE BUG IN THE WORLD. ONE DAY HE THOUGHT HE WOULD GO TO ARIZONA TO LIGHT A FIRE AT YELLOW STONE PARK. SO HE WENT TO ARIZONA. WHEN HE GOT THERE HE WENT STRAIGHT TO YELLOW STONE PARK. HE STAYED AT THE OLD FAITHFULL IN. EARLY THE NEXT MORNING HE WENT TO THE FOREST WITH A BOX OF MATCHES. WHEN HE GOT THEIR HE LIT A TREE. AND THERE WAS A FOREST FIRE. ALL THE ANIMALS WERE SWIMMING ACROSS THE LAKE. THE ONE'S WHO COULDNOT SWIM GOT ON THE ONES WHO COULD SWIM. AND ALL THE ANIMALS WERE SAFE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

Age 9

22. 35213

THEIR WAS A MAN NAMED MR. MCDONNELL. HIS FAMILY WENT CAMPING THEY FINISH EATING. THEN THEY WENT TO GO TRAVEL IN THE FOREST. THEY FORGOT TO LET THE FIRE OUT. LATER WHEN THEY WERE COMING BACK. THEY NOTICED THE FIRE. MR MCDONNELL WENT AND GOT HELP. BY THAT TIME TREES WERE ALL READY FALLING. MANY ANIMALS WERE KILLED IN THIS TERRIBLE FIRE. THEY HAPPENED TO FIND A LITTLE BEAR. IT WAS ALL MOST KILLED. NOW THEY HAVE THE BEAR IN THE ZOO. HE SHALL ALWAYS REMIND US OF FIRES. PLEASE REMEMBER TO BE CAREFUL ALWAYS ABOUT FIRES.

22. 45397

ONE DAY SOME ONE WAS IN THE FOREST. THEY MADE A FIRE. WHEN THEY STARTED HOME THEY DIDN'T DROWND OUT THE FIRE THAT GOOD AND SOME PEICES OF WOOD WERE STILL RED. THE TREES AROUND WERE GETTING VERY HOT. AFTER A LITTLE WHILE THE LEAVES ON THE TREES STARTED ON FIRE. ALL THE TREES AROUND THERE STARTED ON FIRE. ALL THE ANIMALS RAN BUT SOME DIDN'T GET OUT FAST ENEF AND BURND. THERE WERE DEER AND OTHER ANIMALS RUNNING. ALL THE ANIMALS RAN OTHER TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WOODS SO THEY WOULDN'T BE BURNED. WHO EVER FOR GOT TO PUT THE FIRE OUT BETER LERN TO PUT THERE FIRE OUT ALL THE WAY

Age 9

22. 69056

THERE WAS A FOREST FIRE IN GLAZIER NATIONL PARK. HOW SAD IT WAS. THE FOREST RANGERS COULDN'T CONTROL IT SO MOST OF THE ANIMALS DIED AND DROWNED. BUT THE MOST SADEST PART ABOUT IT WAS THE FIRE FLED OVER MANY ACRES OF LAND. IT BURNED AND KILLED A LOT OF WILDLIFE. MOST OF THE ANIMALS FLED FROM DANGER AND SURVIVED. THE DEER AND BEAR AND OTHER ANIMALS TRIED TO SURVIVE AND THEY DID. THE LITTLE ANIMALS SUCH AS A FAWN OR EVEN A PORCIPINE OR A RACCOON WAS SAVED BY RANGERS. THE FINALLY GOT THE FIRE UNDER CONTROLL BUT MOST OF THE FOREST LAND WAS BURNED. ALL THIS BECAUSE SOMEONE WAS CARELESS.

Age 9

22. 53112

THE FOREST FIRE!

IT COULD HAVE HAPPEND BY A CARLESS SMOKER OR CAMPER, WHO KNOWS? ALL THE SUDDEN THEIR WAS JUST AFIRE. A BABY DEER AND HER MOTHER WERE PROBABLY GRAZING. THEY SENCED DANGER! WHAT WAS IT? THE MOTHER PRICKED UP HER EARS AND LISTEND. THE FAWN COULD SMELL SMOKE. THEY COULD NOT SWIM VERY WELL, BUT THE MOTHER KNEW IT WAS IMPORTANT. SHE PLUNGED INTO THE LAKE THROWING THE FAWN AFTER HER. THEY SWAM AS FAST AS THEY COULD TO KEEP AWAY FROM THE FALLS! THEY WERE IN REAL DANGER NOW! WHAT COULD THEY DO? FIND OUT IN OUR NEXT EPISODE!

22. 13590

IT WAS A HOT DAY IN THE FOREST. A CAMPER WAS GETTING READY TO LEAVE HE FORGOT TO DROWN HIS CAMPFIRE. A TINY SPARK JUMPED FROM THE FIRE. FIRST A TWIG CAUGHT ON FIRE. THEN A PINE TREE. SOON THE WHOLE FOREST WAS ON FIRE. ANIMALS FLED FROM THE LEAPPING FLAMES. SOME GOT CAUGHT ON TREES THAT WERE FALLING. ALL THE ANIMALS RAN FOR THE WATER AND GOT AWAY SAFELY. THEN THE RANGERS GOT THE FIRE UNDER CONTROL. SOON IT WAS OUT. THE ANIMALS COULDN'T RETURN BECAUSE IT WASN'T NICE ANY-MORE, ALL BECAUSE OF ONE CARELESS PERSON.

Age 9

22. 66078

THE FOREST FIRE IN COLORADO PARK

ONCE IN A PEACFUL PARK IN COLORADO THER WAS A FOREST FIRE.

ALL AT ONCE THERE WAS THE CRACKING SOUND OF BURNING LOGS AND THE BELOWING OF A BULL ELK. THERE WAS THE SPLASHING OF WATER AND SCREEMING OF MANY ANIMALS.

FINELY ABOVE THE SCREEMING AND SPLASHING OF WATER YOU COULD ALSO HEAR THE ROARING OF AIRPLAINS THEY WERE BRINGING SMOKE-JUMPERS AND DROPING CHIEMACALS ON THE FIRE.

AFTER THE FIRE WAS OUT THE RANGERS FOUND MANY DEAD ANIMALS. THERE WAS LOTS OF TIMBER DESTROYED TOO.

THE RANGERS FOUND A LOSS OF $100,000 AND OVER.

Age 9

22. 24989

ONE DAY A MAN WENT CAMPING IN THE FOREST-HE STARTED A FIRE, BUT HE THOUGHT TO PUT OUT A FIRE YOU MUST BLOW ON IT, SO HE BLEW VERY HARD. THE FIRE GOT BIGGER AND BIGGER AND SOON HE HAD STARTED A FOREST FIRE. A DEER KNEW WHAT TO DO. SHE GOT HER FAWN AND THEY BOTH START-ED SWIMMING ACROSS A RIVER.

HOWEVER, THERE WERE MORE ANIMALS IN THE FOREST. MOST OF THEM DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. SOME TRYED TO RUN INTO THE FOREST, BUT ONLY FOUND THEMSELVES RUNNING RIGHT INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE FIRE. SOME DIED. ONLY THE SMART ONES SURVED.

MUCH DAMAGE WAS DONE BY THIS FIRE. THE MAN WHO STARTED IT WAS VERY BADLY HURT. MANY TREES WERE BURNED DOWN. A LITTLE RACCON WAS FOUND STRANDED ON A ROCK AFTER THE FIRE.

22. 33617

I WAS GOING TO TOWN WHEN ALL OF THE SUDDEN I SAW SOME FLAMES FROM THE FOREST. WHEN I WAS CLOSER I SAW A FIRE! AND IN THE RIVER WERE TO DEERS. I RAN TO MY HOUSE TO TELL MY FATHER BECAUSE HE IS A FIREMAN. WHEN I TOLD HIM HE RAN AND TOLD EVERY FIRE MAN! SOON THE FIRE WAS OUT. THEN I SAW THE DEERS I HAD SAW IN THE RIVER, LYING ON THE GROND. I TOLD MY FATHER AND WE GOT THE DEERS. MY MOTHER DOCTORERED THEM. A FEW WEEKS LATER WE LET THEM GO. BUT EVERY WEEK, THEY CAME BACK AND SEEMED TO THANK ME. I CALLED THEM RANDY AND RENEE. WE BECAME VERY GOOD FRIENDS. THEN ONE DAY RANDY GOT KILLED IN A FOREST FIRE. I HAD RENEE FOR ABOUT FIVE WEEKS MORE. THEN RENEE WAS KILLED IN A FOREST FIRE. AFTER THAT I BECAME SICK. THE DOCTOR SAID IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE DEERS.

Age 13

11. 57728

THE PERSON THAT I ADMIRE IS JOSEPH LISTER. ALL HIS LIFE PEOPLE MOCKED HIM AND TOLD HIM WHAT A FOOL HE WAS FOR THINKING OF THE THEROY OF CLEANLINESS AND SANATATION IN HOSPITALS. BUT BRAVELY JOSEPH FOUGHT ON. IN A HOSPITAL HE HAD ATHORITY OVER A CERTAIN UENG AND HE ADVANCED HIS THEROY THERE. HE MADE THE NURSES WEAR CLEAN CLOTHES, INSISTED ON CLEAN HANDS AND MADE SURE THAT HIS INSTRUMENTS WERE CLEAN AND THE AIR WAS FUMIGATED. IN HIS POST-OPERATIVE UING, OUT OF 500 PATIENTS ONLY 1 DIED. IN ANOTHER POST-OPERATIVE UUNG, LISTER'S METHODS WERE NOT USED AND 300 PATIENTS DIED OF INFECTION, THIS MIGHT SEEM SUBSTANTIAL PROOF THAT LISTER'S IDEAS WERE RIGHT, BUT THE DOCTORS DID NOT ACCEPT THAT. FOR YEARS AND YEARS IN THE HOSPITAL HALLWAYS AND ON CONVENTION FLOORS, JOSEPH FOUGHT FOR HIS THEROY, BUT TO NO AVAIL. THIS GREAT PIONNER FINALY DIED, VERY DISCOURAGED. BUT HIS IDEAS DID NOT DIE. TO DAY THE PERSENTAGE OF PEOPLE DYEING FROM INFECTION IS ALMOST NIL. MANY LIVES HAVE BEEN SAVED BY THIS BRAVE DOCTOR'S IDEA AND PERSERVERANCE TO FIGHT ON.

Age 13

11. 65787

ROSE O'NEAL GREENHOW

I ADMIRE ROSE O'NEAL GREENHOW AS I THINK MANY OTHERS DO THAT HAVE READ HER LIFE STORY. SHE LIVED WHILE THE CIVIL WAR WAS AT ITS HEIGHT. THE WORK SHE DID INCLUDED BEING A NURSE, AND SPY FOR THE CONFEDERACY. AT THE HEIGHT OF HER CAREER, IN SPYING, SHE WAS CAUGHT. HER HOME WAS MADE INTO PRISON FOR OTHER WOMEN SPIES THAT HAD BEEN CAUGHT. THROUGH THE COURSE OF 2 YEARS SHE STILL MANAGED TO GET LETTERS OF INFORMATION TO THE CONFEDERATE PRESIDENT. WHEN HER CAPTORS LEARNED OF HER WRITINGS SHE WAS CONFINED TO HER HOUSE. (SHE WAS ALLOWED WALKS WITH A GUARD BEFORE.) SOON AFTER THIS INCIDENT SHE WAS TRANSPORTED TO A PRISON FOR SOLDIERS THAT HAD BEEN CAUGHT. THE CONDITIONS HERE WERE EVEN WORSE. DISEASES RAGED THROUGH THE OLD PRISON. MEN WERE DYING FROM MALNUTRITION AND STARVATION. AFTER 2 MORE YEARS SHE WAS RELEASED. REALIZING THAT SHE WAS TO WELL KNOWN BY THIS TIME TO BECOME A SPY AGAIN, SHE STARTED WORKING AS A NURSE. THE CONFEDERATE PRESIDENT KNEW THE SOUTH NEEDED HELP SO HE ASKED ROSE TO GO TO ENGLAND. SHE WAS TO TRY AND GET THEIR HELP. WHILE IN ENGLAND ROSE WROTE A BOOK. IT SOLD IN GREAT NUMBERS. ROSE O'NEAL GREENHOW WAS SOON A RICH WOMEN. TRAVELLING BACK TO THE STATES HER BOAT WAS CAUGHT IN A STORM. THE BOAT CAPSIZED AND SHE WAS DROWNED. I ADMIRE HER FOR HER COURAGE AND DETERMINATION.

Age 13

11. 14477

THE PERSON WHO I FIND MOST ADMIRABLE IS DOCTOR THOMAS A. DOOLEY. HIS GREATEST CHARACTERISTIC IS HIS NEVER-ENDING SELF-SACRIFICE. WHILE WORKING FOR THE REFUGEES WHO CAME FROM NORTH VIETNAM TO ESCAPE FROM COMMUNISM HE NEVER ONCE THOUGHT ABOUT HIMSELF. HE STAYED IN A REFUGEE CAMP DOCTORING OTHERS NEEDS, CARING FOR THEM, TRYING TO KEEP LIVING THERE SUITABLE. LONG AFTER THE OTHER AIDS HAD LEFT HE STAYED ON CARING FOR "HIS PEOPLE" HE HELPED FAMILIES ESCAPE ACROSS THE BORDER, RISKING HIS LIFE SO THAT THEY COULD BE FREE. DR. TOM DOOLEY, AFTER HAVING BEEN DANGEROUSLY NEAR THE BORDER HELPING REFUGEES FOR SEVERAL YEARS, WAS THEN TRANSFERRED TO LAOS. HERE THERE WERE ABSOLUTELY NO MEDICAL FACILITIES WHATSOEVER. HE BORROWED MONEY TO BUY MEDICINES AND INSTRUMENTS AND RECEIVED MANY DONATIONS. HE HAD ENOUGH SENSE OF DECENCY TO REFRAIN FROM JUST BARGING IN ON THE VILLAGES AND SAYING HE WAS THE DOCTOR FROM NOW ON. HE KNEW THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE SUSPICIOUS SO HE WENT AROUND GRADUALLY GAINING THEIR CONFIDENCE. DR. DOOLEY KNEW THAT MOST OF THE VILLAGES IN LAOS HAD THEIR OWN "MEDICINE MAN." THESE MEN HAD A GREAT INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE SO TOM DOOLEY SHOWED THE "MEDICINE MAN" THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE OVER. THEY SHARED THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINE WITH EACH OTHER AND WORKED TOGETHER TO TAKE OF THE PEOPLE. AFTER HAVING BEEN IN LAOS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, TOM DOOLEY DECIDED TO GO ON A TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES, GIVE LECTURES ABOUT HIS WORK, AND RAISE MONEY TO AID "HIS PEOPLE." WHILE TOURING THE UNITED STATES, DR. DOOLEY BECAME VERY ILL AND SOON DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD CANCER OF THE SPINE. HE WAS LAID UP FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND THEN HE SAID THAT HE WANTED TO GO BACK TO "HIS PEOPLE." "THEY NEED ME," HE SAID. THROUGH MUCH PERSUASION DR. THOMAS A. DOOLEY WAS PERMITTED TO GO BACK TO "HIS PEOPLE." HE FLEW IMMEDIATELY TO LAOS AND "HIS PEOPLE" REJOICED. THERE HE SPENT MANY HAPPY DAYS UNTIL ONE DAY HE BECAME SERIOUSLY ILL AND WAS IMMEDIATELY FLOWN TO THE UNITED STATES.

Age 13

11. 41250

THE PERSON I MOST ADMIRE WOULD BE HERB ALPERT BECAUSE I PLAY THE CORNET AND CAN APPRECIATE HIS KIND OF WORK. HERB ALPERT SELECTED HIS TIJUANA BRASS. AS IT TURNS OUT, HE DID VERY WELL. WHEN HERB WAS JUST STARTING HIS GROUP HE BEGAN WORKING ON HIS OWN STYLE OF MUSIC. AFTER A WHILE HE DECIDED TO TAKE A CHANCE ON MAKING A RECORD. HE ONLY HAD FIVE-HUNDRED DOLLARS AND THIS VENTURE WAS TO COST HIM MOST OF THIS MONEY. HIS FIRST ALBUM WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. AFTER THIS THERE WAS NO STOPPING HIM. HE HAS NOW MADE TWELVE ALBUMS. HE HAS A GIANT RECORD STUDIO UNDER WHICH MANY OTHER PROFESSIONAL SOLOISTS AND GROUPS MAKE THEIR RECORDINGS. THE OUT-COME OF HIS HARD STUDY OF THE TRUMPET WAS FAME, FORTUNE, AND INNER TRANQUILITY. HE KNOWS THAT HE MADE HIMSELF A SUCCESS AND AT THE SAME TIME BROUGHT PLEASURE AND ENJOYMENT TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES. THIS IS HIS ADMIRABLE CHARICTERISTIC. GETTING FAME AND FORTUNE AND HAVING PEOPLE ENJOY EVERY MINUTE OF IT. EVEN THOUGH HE HAS ENOUGH MONEY TO LAST A LIFETIME AND MORE, HE STILL MAKES MORE ALBUMS AND TELEVISION APPEARANCES. THIS IS WHY I ADMIRE HIM.

Age 13

11. 47125

I ADMIRE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BECAUSE OF HIS USE OF PEACE. HE KNEW ABOUT SEGREGATION, BUT HIS KNOWLEDGE DIDN'T MAKE HIM BITTER TO WHITE PEOPLE. HE LEARNED ABOUT SEGREGATION AT AN EARLY AGE. WHEN HE WAS SIX, HE USED TO PLAY WITH TWO WHITE BOYS WHOSE FATHER OWNED A NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY. ONE DAY THE MOTHER OF THE TWO WHITE BOYS TOLD THEM NOT TO PLAY WITH "NIGGERS" ANYMORE. MARTIN WENT HOME, SAD AND BEWILDERED, AND ASKED HIS MOTHER WHY. SADLY, SHE TOLD HIM THE STORY OF SLAVERY, AND OF THE CIVIL WAR, AND OF SEGREGATION. BUT SHE TOLD HIM NOT TO LET SEGREGATION MAKE HIM FEEL INFERIOR. "YOU ARE JUST AS GOOD AS ANYONE," SHE SAID. "YOU CAN BECOME JUST AS FINE A PERSON AS ANYONE." MARTIN NEVER FORGOT THESE WORDS. AT NINETEEN, HE GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE IN ALABAMA. THEN HE WENT NORTH TO STUDY FOR THE MINISTRY. GOING TO SCHOOL WITH WHITES FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE WORKED DOUBLY HARD TO SHOW THAT HE WAS "JUST AS GOOD AS ANYONE". HE GRADUATED WITH THE HIGHEST GRADE AVERAGE OF ANYONE IN HIS CLASS, AND HIS CLASSMATES ELECTED HIM PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT BODY. WHEN HE WAS FINISHED WITH SCHOOL, HE COULD HAVE STAYED IN THE NORTH, BUT HE AND HIS WIFE, CORETTA, DECIDED THAT IT WAS HIS DUTY TO RETURN TO THE SOUTH. HE TAUGHT HIS PEOPLE TO LOVE THEIR WHITE BROTHERS, NO MATTER WHAT THEY DID TO THEM. AND HE PRACTISED WHAT HE PREACHED. ONE NIGHT WHEN HE WAS SPEAKING AT A MEETING HIS HOUSE WAS BOMBED. HE TOLD THE CROWD OF ANGRY NEGROES THERE TO CALM DOWN AND GO HOME. HE ONCE SAID "THE STRONG MAN IS THE MAN WHO CAN STAND UP FOR HIS RIGHTS AND NOT HIT BACK." HE IS DEAD NOW, BUT HE WILL ALWAYS LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AS THE PROTECTOR OF PEACE.

Age 13

11. 54087

GANDHI

GANDHI BELIVED THAT ALL MEN SHOULD BE EQUAL AND SHOULD HAVE THE SAME CHANCES TO GET UP IN LIFE AS ANYONE ELSE. NO ONE SHOULD BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST OR MADE TO DO ALL THE UNPLEASENT JOBS FOR ANOTHER CLASS. NEITHER SHOULD ANY GROUP HAVE TO TAKE ORDERS FROM ANY OTHER GROUP. WHEN GANDI WAS A YOUNG MAN THE BRITISH RULED INDIA AND DISCRIMINATED AGAINST THE INDIANS. THE BRITISH ALSO MADE THE LAWS FOR INDIA INSTEAD OF THE INDIANS. GANDHI SET OUT TO CHANGE THE SITUATION. BESIDES BELIEVING IN EQUEAL RIGHTS GANDHI ALSO WAS A VERY STRONG PACIFIST AND BELIEVED THAT NONVIOLENCE WAS THE ONLY GOOD MEANS OF GETTING AN END. ALTHOUGH HE AND HIS HUNDREDS OF FOLLOWERS WERE OFTEN ARRESTED AND CRUELLY TREATED GANDHI NEVER ONCE RESORTED TO VIOLENCE. HOWEVER HIS STRIKES, BOYCOTTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS CAUSED SO MUCH TROUBLE IN INDIA THAT THE BRITISH FINALLY GAVE UP AND PULLED OUT OF INDIA.

BESIDES WORKING TO GIVE INDIANS AS MUCH RIGHTS AS ENGLISHMEN GANDHI HAD ANOTHER GOAL-TO ABOLISH THE CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA.

ALL THE INDIANS IN INDIA WERE DIVIDED INTO CASTES. A CASTE WAS A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHICH WERE HIGHER THAN SOME OF THE CASTES BUT LOWER THAN OTHERS. A PERSON COULD ONLY MARRY SOMEONE FROM THIER OWN CASTE. THE HIGHEST CASTE WAS THE BRAMEN CASTE AND THE LOWEST WAS THE UNTOUGHABLES.

Age 13

11. 38760

JOHN F. KENEDY

JOHN KENEDY WAS A GREAT MAN BECAUSE HE WAS HONEST, AND MORE SO BECAUSE HE HAD THE ABILITY TO SEE ALL PEOPLE AS EQUALS. HE TRIED TO HELP THE BLACKS AND THE POOR PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY TO REACH THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY. HE ALSO TRIED VERY HARD TO MAKE OTHER PEOPLE REALIZE THAT EVERYONE IS A BROTHER TO EVERYONE ELSE.

JOHN KENEDY GAVE THE POOR A REASON TO TRY TO MAKE IT ON THEIR OWN. HE GAVE THEM HOPE IN THEMSELF, BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN POOR SO LONG THEY HAD FORGOTEN THAT THERE IS A BETTER LIFE. THEIR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS HAD LIVED IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT THEY DO NOW.

J.F.K. WAS A GREAT MAN BECAUSE HE REALIZED THE PROBLEMS OF THIS SOCITY AND HE WAS AN EVEN GREATER MAN BECAUSE HE TRIED TO CHANGE THESE PROBLEMS. HE WAS LOVED BY MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHITE AND BLACK, RICH AND POOR, OLD AND YOUNG BY THOSE PEOPLE WHO DISSAGREED WITH HIM AS WELL AS THOSE WHO AGREED WITH HIM.

IT WAS A SAD DAY FOR AMERICA WHEN HE DIED. BUT HIS DEATH CAUSED A GREAT CHANGE IN AMERICA. HIS PROJECTS ARE STILL GOING ON TODAY THROUGH THE HELP OF MANY AMERICANS. IN EVERY SENCE OF THE WORD HE HELPED OTHERS.

Age 13

11. 11463

I ADMIRE THE LATE PRESIDENT KENNEDY BECAUSE OF HIS DETERMINATION AND COURAGE. HE WAS A MAN OF KNOWLEDGE, AND GREATLY SUITED TO THE POST OF PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, IT TAKES MORE THAN KNOWLEDGE TO RUN A COUNTRY. YOU MUST HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITS PEOPLE AND A WILL TO HELP THEM.

I'M SURE THAT MOST OF THE MEN WHO WERE PRESIDENT ARE TO BE ADMIRED FOR THEIR GREAT COURAGE. PRIOR TO WHAT SOME PEOPLE MIGHT THINK YOU CAN NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHAT IS BEST. YOU CANNOT ALSO PLEASE EVERYONE IN A COUNTRY, LARGE OR SMALL. HOWEVER, THESE TRAITS SHOWED REMARKABLY IN JOHN KENNEDY.

AN EXAMPLE OF HIS COURAGE WAS HIS ACTION IN CUBA. THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT WAS BUILDING MISSILE SITES ON CUBA. THIS PLACED THE UNITED STATES IN A DANGEROUS POSITION. CUBA, BEING VERY CLOSE TO THE U.S., COULD HAVE CAUSED A LOT OF DAMAGE TO THE COUNTRY. WHEN THE PRESIDENT HEARD OF THIS, HE ACTED WITH SPEED AND COURAGE, DEMANDING THAT THE SITES BE REMOVED. HE ALSO THREATENED TO START A WAR IF THEY WEREN'T. THIS SWIFT ACTION CAUSED AN OUTCRY FROM ALL OF THOSE WHO ADVOCATED DIPLOMACY. HOWEVER THE THREAT DID THE TRICK AND THE RUSSIANS PULLED OUT.

WHEN THE PRESIDENT WAS KILLED BY AN ASSISINS BULLET, THE WORLD MOURNED FOR THIS GREAT MAN. HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING AN ORDINARY MAN, NOT OVERWHELMED BY POWER. I THINK HE WILL GO DOWN IN AMERICAN HISTORY AS A TRULY GREAT EXAMPLE OF COURAGE AND DETERMINATION.

Age 13

11. 22917

I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE GREATEST MEN IN HISTORY IS JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY. HE WAS THE FRIEND OF THE RICH, AND POOR ALIKE, FOR HE KNEW WHAT IT WAS TO BE POOR. HE WAS A KIND MAN. NEVER ONCE INTENTIONALLY HURTING ANYONE.

WHENEVER HE WAS ASKED FOR HELP, HE WAS SURE TO PROVIDE IT. A SMALL, "UNIMPORTANT" NATION WAS IN A STATE OF CIVIL WAR. THE SIDE WHICH WAS FIGHTING FOR FREEDON REQUESTED OUR AID. THE FRENCH HAD BEEN HELPING THEM BUT THEY HAD RECENTLY LEFT. THE SOUTH VIET MAMIESE NEEDED HELP DESPERATLY, FOR THEY WERE BEING OVERRUN BY THE VIET-CONG. THEY HAD NO PLACE ELSE TO TURN TO, SO, IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT, THEY ASKED THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR HELP.

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, AN IRISHMAN BY BIRTH, TOLD THEM THAT WE WOULD HELP THE DRIVE BACK THIER ENEMY. HE SENT OVER TROOPS, GUNS, MINITIONS, SHIPS, BOMBERS, HELICOPTERS, YES, HE WOULD THEM LIBERATE THEMSELVES IF IT TOOK EVERY LAST MAN.

Age 13

11.06377

THE PERSON I ADMIRE IS A FRENCHMAN BY THE NAME OF JACUES COUSTEAU. I ADMIRE HIM BECAUSE HE IS DEDICATED TO A CAUSE, THAT IS OCEANOGRAPHY. HE HAS MADE THOUSANDS OF DIVES IN THE OCEAN AND HAS EVEN SPENT A MONTH UNDERWATER IN A SEALAB. DURING HIS STAY UNDERWATER HE HAS MADE STUDIES OF FISH AND LIVING THINGS UNDER THE SEA. HE HAS ALSO DONE WHAT NO MAN HAS DONE BEFORE, HE LAUNCHED AN UNDERWATER VEHICLE FROM AN UNDERWATER GARAGE AND EXPLORED THE OCEAN FLOOR, THEN RETURN IT TO THE UNDERWATER GARAGE. I ALSO ADMIRE HIS PLANS OF THE SEALAB. HE HAD A KITCHEN, AND AN ULTRAVIOLENT RAY SHOWER TO MAKE UP FOR THE ULTRAVIOLENT RAYS FROM THE SUN THAT COULD NOT REACH THEM WHEN THEY WERE UNDER WATER. HE ALSO HAD MANY TELEVISION SHOWS ABOUT HIM. ONE WAS ABOUT WHEN HE TOOK TWO WILD SEALS AND TRIED TO MAKE THEM PETS. WHILE HE WAS DOING THIS HE WAS DREDGING THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN FOR TREASURES THAT HE SUSPECTED OF BEING TREASURES THAT HE SUSPECTED OF BEING TREASURES OFF OF A SPANISH GALLEON. HE DIDN'T FIND MUCH TREASURE, BUT HE FOUND ANCHORS, CHAINS, CANNONS, AND CANNON BALLS. I PLAN TO FOLLOW HIM IN THE FIELD OF OCEANOGRAPHY AND GO TO A COLLEGE THAT TEACHES IT.

Age 17

10. 06690

THE JOB OF PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS ONE THAT DEMANDS COURAGE, FORTITUDE, AND, MOST OF ALL, A TRUE DESIRE TO HELP BRING PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO OUR COUNTRY. IN MY OPINION, FORMER PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON MET THESE DEMANDS BETTER THAN ANY OTHER PRESIDENT WE HAVE HAD. I THINK PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S MOST ADMIRABLE QUALITY WAS THAT OF HONEST CONCERN ABOUT AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY. HIS RECORD OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION WAS ONE OF THE FINEST THIS COUNTRY HAS EVER WITNESSED. I FELT HOPEFUL UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION, EVEN DURING THE RIOTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS, BECAUSE I TRUSTED HIS JUDGMENTS AND KNEW HE WAS A CARING PRESIDENT AND NOT JUST A "LAWGIVER." I HAD FAITH IN HIS ABILITY TO GET RIGHT TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER TO FIND OUT WHY THINGS WERE HAPPENING. IN CIVIL RIGHTS CASES, FOR INSTANCE, PRESIDENT JOHNSON WAS NOT SO MUCH CONCERNED WITH THE RIOTS AND DESTRUCTION AS WITH THE REASONS FOR THE RIOTS-THE POVERTY, THE HATE, THE SHAME, THE HOPELESSNESS. HE WANTED TO HELP THE PEOPLE, NOT JUST ENFORCE A LAW.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON WAS A LIBERAL, UNDERSTANDING MAN WHO CARED ABOUT HIS COUNTRY, AND, MORE IMPORTANT, CARED ABOUT HIS PEOPLE.

Age 17

10. 15081

THE FAMOUS PERSON I MOST ADMIRE IS GEORGE WASHINGTON. GEORGE WASHINGTON HAD COURAGE, PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH, A STRONG BELIEF IN FREEDOM AND THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY AND A FIERCE DETERMINATION TO MAKE AMERICA A FREE AND INDEPENDENT COUNTRY WITH A GOVERNMENT BASED ON THESE IDEALS THAT HE, HIMSELF, POSSESSED. HE DISPLAYED HIS COURAGE THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE--FROM THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR TO THE AMERICA REVOLUTION EVEN TO HIS DEATHBED WHEN HE DIED IN PHYSICAL AGONY WITHOUT A COMPLAINT. HIS COURAGE DURING THE REVOLUTION IS SHOWN NOT ONLY BY THE FAMOUS INCAMPMENT AT VALLEY FORGE AND HIS CROSSING THE DELAWARE RIVER TO SURPRIZE THE HESSIANS BUT ALSO BY THE FACT THAT HE WAS FREQUENTLY AT THE HEAD OF CHARGES MADE AGAINST THE BRITISH DURING THE WAR AND BY THE FACT THAT HE NEVER ASKED HIS MEN TO DO ANYTHING THAT HE, HIMSELF, WOULD NOT DO. WASHINGTON'S PHYSICAL STRENGTH IS WELL-KNOWN BY ALL BUT HIS MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH IS SHOWN BY HIS ABILITY TO WITHSTAND THE INSULTS AND CRITICISMS OF HIM BECAUSE THE WAR WAS NOT GOING WELL FOR US WITHOUT SACRIFICING HIS BELIEFS AND BY HIS ATTRIBUTION TO GOD OF ALL HIS SUCCESS. HIS LOVE OF HIS COUNTRY IS SHOWN BY THE FACT THAT HE SPENT HIS WHOLE LIFE DEVOTED TO HER SERVICE AT THE SACRIFICE OF HIS HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & PEACE OF MIND. THUS WASHINGTON IS WORTHY OF HIS FAME BECAUSE HE EMBODIES ALL THE IDEALS AND PRINCIPLES OUR COUNTRY STANDS FOR.

Age 17

10. 02113

THE MOST FAMOUS MAN WHO EVER LIVED WAS FAMOUS FOR HIS LOVE. HE WAS NOT A PHYSICALLY UNUSUAL MAN, HE DID NOT PLAY SPORTS OR BREAK ANY RECORDS OR WIN ANY MEDALS. HE WAS A SIMPLE MAN WHO LIVED A LONG TIME AGO AND YET HE IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AND IMPORTANT MAN IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY. HE WILL BE THE ONE WHO WILL RESCUE OUR FALTERING SOCIETY IN THE FUTURE.

HIS LIFE WAS SHORT BUT POWERFUL. FOR ONLY THE LAST THREE YEARS OF HIS LIFE HE PREACHED THE MESSAGE OF LOVE. LOVE FOR ALL MEN AND NOT JUST FRIENDS OR FAMILY. HE INSULTED NO-ONE, COMMITTED NO CRIMES, AND YET WAS EXECUTED AS A CRIMINAL. HE WAS BORN INTO A SICK SOCIETY AND WHEN HE DIED IT WAS JUST AS SICK, BUT WITH ONE NEW ADDITION. A TINY SEED OF AN IDEA WAS LEFT BEHIND. BUT THIS IDEA HAS NEVER REALLY FLOURISHED; IT HAS SURVIVED. AND NOW IN OUR PRESENT-DAY, JUST-AS-SICK-SOCIETY THIS IDEA IS BEGINNING TO GERMINATE AND POSSIBLY WILL SPREAD AND MULTIPLY UNTIL OUR ENTIRE WORLD IS DOMINATED BY LOVE. AND WE WILL LIVE TOGETHER AS ONE, ALL DUE TO A POOR CARPENTER FROM GALILEE, TWO-THOUSAND YEARS AGO NAMED JESUS CHRIST.

Age 17

10. 04458

PERHAPS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A MAN TO WHOM I CAN LOOK WITH ADMIRATION IS JERRY RUBIN, HEAD OF NATIONAL STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THERE HAVE BEEN MEN WHOSE IDEAS RAN CONTRARY TO POPULAR OPINION, THE "STATUS QUO," OR WHAT-HAVE-YOU. MANY OF THESE MEN SAW WRONG IN THEIR SOCIETY, AND THEIR LIVES WERE LIVED, AND OFTEN ENDED, IN SUPPORT OF CHANGES WHICH WOULD RIGHT THEM.

RUBIN, AND MANY LIKE HIM, AT ONE TIME BELIEVED THAT, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE GRAVE PROBLEMS IN OUR COUNTRY, THEY COULD BE SOLVED BY "WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEM." (TO USE A NOW POPULAR CLICHE'). HOWEVER, THEIR HOPES WERE BITTERLY SHATTERED, AND, UNLIKE SOME, WHO PREFERRED TO JOIN A SYSTEM THEY COULDN'T CHANGE, THEY REJECTED IT. FOR MANY, IT IS A TRYING WAY OF LIFE; CONSTANT SUSPICION BY THE GOVERNMENT, POLICE HARRASSMENT, LACK OF A JOB, AND OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH ACCOMPANY REJECTION OF A SYSTEM WHICH CLAIMS MOST OF THIS SOCIETY, AND, INDEED, MOST OF THE WESTERN WORLD; HOWEVER, JERRY RUBIN, AND OTHERS LIKE HIM, ACCEPT THIS WAY OF LIFE AS A CHALLENGE, AND A CHALLENGE WHICH THEY ENJOY. THOUGH I MAY DISAGREE UPON CERTAIN POINTS WITH HIM, I REGARD HIM NOT AS AN IDOL BUT AS A PERSON TO LOOK TO FOR EXAMPLE OF COURAGE WHEN FACING SITUATIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE HE DAILY FACES, OR RATHER, GREETS WITH OPEN ARMS.

Age 17

10. 04812

I THINK THAT A MAN WHO HAS BEEN FIGHTING FOR HIS COUNTRY FOR YEARS WHILE BEING SCORNED UNJUSTLY BY MANY PEOPLE IS CHARLES DE GAULLE. DE GAULLE HAS LIVED ONLY FOR THE GOOD OF FRANCE EVEN SINCE HIS EARLY DAYS IN THE FRENCH ARMY. HE TRIED TO WORN HIS PEOPLE OF THE DANGER OF A GERMAN INVASION BUT NO ONE WOULD LISTEN. LATER, DURING THE WAR HE ORGANIZED THE FREE FRENCH FORCES WHICH WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE ALLIED VICTORIES IN FRANCE. MOST AMERICANS RESENT DE GAULLE. THIS RESENTMENT STARTED DURING WORLD WAR II WHEN HE DEMANDED FROM ROOSEVELT, CHURCHILL AND STALIN THE RIGHT FOR THE FRENCH TO RUN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. THIS TURNED ROOSEVELT AND CONSEQUENTLY, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, AGAINST HIM.

WHEN AN AMERICAN LEADER FIGHTS ONLY FOR THE GOOD OF HIS COUNTRY HE IS A PATRIOT, A GREAT MAN. WHEN CHARLES DE GAULLE FIGHTS FOR HIS COUNTRY HE IS CRITICIZED IN EVERY IMAGINABLE WAY.

I ADMIRE A MAN WHO WILL STAND AGAINST THE GREAT WORLD POWERS AND FIGHT FOR WHAT HE BELIEVES IN--HIS COUNTRY, HIS PEOPLE. I ADMIRE CHARLES DE GAULLE--

Age 17

10. 06262

I ADMIRE CMDR. FLOYD BUCHER OF THE U.S. PUEBLO, SPY SHIP. HE HAS BEEN TAUNTED, HARASSED AND GENERALLY SLANDERED CONCERNING THE CAPTURE OF HIS SHIP. HE HAD BEEN SURROUNDED BY A SUPERIOR ENEMY FORCE, TOO FAR FROM INTERNATIONAL WATERS TO MAKE A BREAK FOR IT, AND DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO CALL FOR HELP. HE DECIDED THAT INSTEAD OF TRYING TO FIGHT, IN WHICH CASE HIS ENTIRE CREW WOULD HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT, HE WOULD SURRENDER AND STALL FOR TIME, SO THAT HE COULD DESTROY AS MUCH TOP SECRET INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. HE HAS SINCE BEEN RETURNED TO AMERICA WITH HIS ABUSED CREWMEN. FOR SEVERAL GRUELING MONTHS NOW HE HAS BEEN FACING NATIONAL INQUIRY BOARDS CONCERNING THE SHIP'S POSITION IN ENEMY WATERS. HE HAS VIOLATED A CODE REGULATION OF THE NAVY WHICH STATES THAT NO AMERICAN VESSEL COULD BE SEARCHED BY A FOREIGN POWER. CMDR. BUCHER USED SOME JUDGEMENT IN HIS DECISION BY SURRENDERING, INSTEAD OF FIGHTING WHICH COULD HAVE KINDLED WORLD WAR III. HE IS UNDER THE MOST INTENSE PRESSURE POSSIBLE AT THIS TIME, AND HIS HOPE OF FUTURE IS NOT BRIGHT MILITARILY. YET I FEEL THIS MAN SHOWED COOL DELIBERATION UNDER THE PRESSURE OF A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT. HE SEEMS TO ACQUIRE A CERTAIN LOVE OF THE NAVY FROM EVERY TRIP. HE HAS A CERTAIN CHARISMA ABOUT HIM THAT TELLS YOU HE IS FOR REAL, HE WANTS TO LIVE. HE ALSO MANIFESTS HIS GREAT LOVE OF HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN, FOR AS HE WAS BEING TORTURED IN NORTH KOREA HE CONSTANTLY MURMURED HER NAME OVER AND OVER AGAIN. HE EMBODIES ALL THE TRUE VIRTUES WHICH I FEEL A TRULY ADMIRABLE MAN MUST HAVE.

Age 17

10. 08246

THERE AREN'T MANY FAMOUS PEOPLE I REALLY ADMIRE; THEY ALL SEEM RATHER FALSE TO ME. HOWEVER, I DO FEEL A CERTAIN DEGREE OF ADMIRATION AND RESPECT FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. THIS MAN PERSEVERED CONSTANTLY, NO MATTER WHAT PROBLEMS MAY HAVE ARISEN, TO FIGHT FOR HIS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS. HE WENT WHERE HE FELT HELP WAS NEEDED AND TRIED TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE PEOPLE PEACE-FUL WAYS & MEANS OF TO GO ABOUT OBTAINING WHATEVER FREEDEOMS OR RIGHTS THEY MAY HAVE FELT THEY WERE MISSING.

HERE WAS A MAN WHO SACRIFICED HIS TIME & WORK & EVENT-UALLY HIS LIFE FOR A CAUSE HE FELT SO STRONGLY IN HIS HEART. NOT MANY PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE SO MUCH FOR SO MANY OTHER PEOPLE BESIDE THEMSELVES. PEOPLE TODAY ARE NOT USUALLY SO WILLING TO GIVE UP AS MUCH AS THEIR OWN LIFE FOR A CAUSE. CONVICTIONS WITHIN PEOPLE ARE NOT USUALLY SO STRONG. BUT YET, EVEN THOUGH, MARTIN LUTHER KING PROBABLY REALIZED THAT SOMEDAY IT MIGHT COME DOWN TO THIS HUMAN SACRIFICE, HE STILL PER-SEVERED IN WHAT HE FELT HE NEEDED FOR HIS PEOPLE. THIS I FEEL CONTRIBUTES TO HIS GREATNESS AS A HUMAN BEING AND A LEADER.

Age 17

10. 12091

I ADMIRE NOT A PARTICULAR PERSON, BUT ALL THOSE PERSONS WHO ADMINISTER POLLS, LIKE THIS ONE. THESE PEOPLE ARE DEDICATED TO INFORMING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AS TO HOW THEY BELIEVE. OUR POLL TAKERS HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SUCH GREAT FEATS AS PERSUADING PRESIDENT JOHNSON NOT TO RUN. THIS PARTICULAR TEST DEMONSTRATES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MOST POLLS. LIKE OUR UNITED STATES CENSUS, IT IS INCREDIBLY INQUISITIVE. IT ATTEMPTS TO MEASURE THE PROGRESS OF UNITED STATES EDUCATION THROUGH TEN QUESTIONS, THUS DEMONSTRATING OVER-SIMPLIFICATION. IT POLLED ONLY A SMALL MINORITY OF THE GROUPS, BUT WILL TOUT THESE OPINIONS AS THOSE OF THE ENTIRE GROUP. THIS TEST SHOWS ALL THAT IS GREAT IN AMERICAN POLLS.

I SINCERELY HOPE THAT THIS TEST HAS GIVEN YOU THE INFORMATION YOU WANTED. I HOPE THAT YOU, THE MYSTERIOUS CAPE, HAVE RECEIVED SOME SERVICE FROM ME. I HOPE THIS BECAUSE OF MY DEEP RESPECT AND ADMIRATION FOR THE ALL-AMERICAN POLL TAKER.

Age 17

10. 15811

A PARTCULARLY DESIRABLE QUALITY IS THE ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE. NO GREAT WORK CAN COME FROM MAN'S MIND UNLESS HE HAS THE ABILITY TO DEVOTE HIS THOUGHT TO ONE PURPOSE. LEONARD EULER EXEMPLIFIES THIS CHARACTERISTIC. DURING HIS LIFE HE MADE MANY GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORETICAL MATHEMATICS, INCLUDING THE FOUNDATION OF TOPOLOGY. IF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS IN ABTRUSE NUMBER THEORY ARE NOT ENOUGH TO QUALIFY HIS GREAT POWER OF CONCENTRATION, IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT DURING THE LATTER PART OF HIS LIFE EULER BECAME BLIND. BLINDNESS FOR MOST MATHEMATICIANS WOULD MEAN RUIN, FOR HIGHLY COMPLEX PROBLEMS REQUIRE LONG PROOFS THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR MOST PEOPLE TO FOLLOW MENTALLY. EULER, HOWEVER, CONTINUED HIS WORK. HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE EXTRACTED SQUARE ROOTS MENTALLY TO OVER FIFTY DECIMAL PLACES! THIS FEAT IS, OF COURSE, FAR BEYOND THE CAPABILITIES OF MOST PEOPLE; BUT A MONUMENT TO THE GREAT ABILITY OF A MAN WHO HAD THE DETERMINATION AND MENTAL PROWESS THAT ALLOWED HIM TO OVERCOME A GREAT HANDICAP. BECAUSE OF LEONARD EULER'S GIFT OF EXTREME CONCENTRATION, HE CONTINUED HIS FRUITFUL WORK AND LEFT DISCOVERIES THAT HAVE GIVEN OTHERS THE ABILITY TO SEE EVEN BETTER INTO THE COMPLEXITIES THAT SURROUND THEM.

Age 17

10. 34051

MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS A MAN WHOM I ADMIRED. HE HAD AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, OF ALL MEN, NO MATTER WHAT COLOR, CREED, OR BACKGROUND, LIVING TOGETHER UNDER THE U. S. FLAG IN PEACE. IN ALL HIS ACTIONS, HE CONTINUED TO FIGHT FOR HIS CAUSE EVEN THOUGH HE WAS IN CONSTANT DANGER OF HIS LIFE, FROM PEOPLE WITH OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS. HE WAS A MAN OF GREAT STRENGTH, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND IN HIS CHARACTER, IN HIS PLIGHT TO MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL MANKIND. I PICTURE HIM AS ONE OF THE GREATEST MEN THAT EVER LIVED. FIGHTING PEACEFULLY FOR HIS IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, HE DIED VIOLENTLY FOR HIS CAUSE. THIS MAN SPREAD HIS DREAM THROUGH HIS LIFE TIME AND THE THINGS HE CARRIED THROUGH, GAVE HOPE FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM TO COME THROUGH.

IF ONLY ALL MEN WERE LIKE HIM, THE WORLD WOULD BE TRULY GREAT. WITH ALL THE WARS, POVERTY, RACISM, AND GREED AMONG MEN IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR POWER, IT SEEMS ANY DREAMS THAT BEGIN, WILL END IN NIGHTMERES OF DESTRUCTION. I FEEL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING REACHED FAR IN HIS HOPES, AND MAYBE SOMEDAY THE CAUSE HE WANTED WILL BE IN REACH.

Age 17

10. 38497

I ADMIRE THE PHYSICAL COURAGE OF HELEN KELLER. SHE, STRICKEN BY DISEASE WHILE A YOUNG CHILD, WAS DEAF, BLIND, AND UNABLE TO SPEAK.

THE DRAMATIC STORY OF MISS KELLER'S LIFE CONSISTED OF MANY TRUMATIC EXPERIENCES AND GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS EQUALLED BY NO OTHER LIVING PERSON.

WITH THE HELP OF A DEVOTED WOMAN AND TEACHER, ANN SULLIVAN, MISS KELLER WAS ABLE TO OPEN THE CURTAINS OF HER ONCE DARK LIFE TO THE BEAUTIES OF THE WORLD. SHE WAS ALWAYS BLIND AND DEAF, BUT HER INNABILITY TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS AND TO BE UNDERSTOOD WAS OVERCOME WITH THE USE OF SIGN LANGUAGE AND THE BRAILE ALPHABET. SHE, AFTER MUCH DETERMINATION, WAS EVEN ABLE TO SPEAK AS SHE GREW OLDER.

AT ONE INSTANCE IN HER LIFE MISS KELLER WAS SLEEPING IN HER HOUSE WHEN IT CAUGHT FIRE. SHE, HAVING A KEEN SENCE OF SMELL AND SENCING SOMETHING WAS WRONG, MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM HER HOUSE UNHARMED. THUS PROVING SHE WAS A WOMAN CAPABLE OF ACCOMPLISHING GREAT TASKS EVEN WITH THE HANDICAPS SHE HAD.

MISS KELLER, NOW DEAD AFTER A TRULY OUTSTANDING LIFE, SHOULD TEACH A LESSON TO US ALL CONCERNING THE ACHIEVEMENTS WE, UNHANDICAPPED PEOPLE, ARE CAPABLE OF.

Adult

86

000 BLANK STREET
CITY, STATE

JULY 9, 1969

HIGHWAY COMMISSIONER OLIVER P STROUD
STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
CITY, STATE

DEAR SIR:

AS A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, THE NEW PLANS FOR AN INTERCHANGE ON THE EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITAL IS OF GREAT INTEREST TO ME.

MAY I SAY THAT I AM STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THIS PLAN. WINDSORVILLE HAS LONG BEEN A HISTORIC SPOT IN OUR STATE. IT HAS MUCH PAST HISTORY HERE WHICH SHOULD NOT BE DESTROYED. YOUR PLAN FOR THE INTERCHANGE WILL BRING IN MANY TOURISTS AND COMMERCIALISM ALONG WITH IT.

IT IS MY OPINION THAT OUR MAYOR OUGHT WITHDRAW HIS PLEA FOR THE INTERCHANGE, STRIVE TO KEEP THE HISTORIC TRADITION OF WINDSORVILLE AND SEEK OUT OTHER MEANS FOR LOWERING HIS TAX RATE.

IT IS MY HOPE THAT YOU WILL LOOK INTO THIS MATTER FURTHER AND FIND THAT THIS PLAN WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

MR RESPONDENT

Adult

7723

I AM OPPOSED TO THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE AT WINDSOR VALLEY AND WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT THE MAYOR'S LETTER DOES NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF A MAGORITY OF THE CITIZENS OF THIS COMMUNITY. ORDERLY GROWTH CAN BE ACHIEVED HERE WITHOUT THE INFUSION OF THE TYPE OF COMMERCIALIZATION THAT COMES FROM PLACING SUCH AN INTERCHANGE IN A SMALL TOWN. YOUR ORIGINAL DECISION NOT TO LOCATE AN INTERCHANGE HERE WAS PRESUMABLY BASED ON ADEQUATE TRAFFIC STUDIES AND THE THOROUGH CONSIDERATION OF THE NEEDS OF TRAVELERS IN GENERAL AND THE NEEDS OF THIS COMMUNITY. THE MAYORS BELATED CALL FOR "PROGRESS" DOES NOT CHANGE THE RESULT OF YOUR EARLIER FINDINGS AND YOUR EARLIER DECISION SHOULD BE OFFERED.

AN EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE IS COMPLETELY INCONSISTENT WITH THE NARROW AND QUIET STREETS WE NOW HAVE IN THIS TOWN. MOST OF US HAVE MOVED HERE TO AVOID PRECISELY THE RESULT WHICH THE MAYOR WANTS TO ACHIEVE. OUR DECISION TO MERGE OUR LIVES WITH OUR PAST AND TO LIVE HERE QUIETLY SHOULD BE RESPECTED BY YOU. UNFORTUNATELY OUR MAYOR DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THIS BUT AFTER NOVEMBER I CAN ASSURE HIS VIEWS WILL BE ONLY THOSE OF ANOTHER PRIVATE CITIZEN.

Adult

13461

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD,

CHANGE IN A BEAUTIFUL, HISTORICAL, RURAL COMMUNITY COMES NEITHER EASILY OR QUICKLY; HOWEVER, CHANGE MUST BE AND MAN'S BEST WAY TO ACCEPT CHANGE IS TO USE AND DIRECT IT RATHER THAN FIGHTING IT.

I WOULD LIKE, AS A CITIZEN OF WINDSORVILLE, TO SUPPORT YOUR PLANS FOR A NEW HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE.

THOUGH THIS HIGHWAY IS A CHANGE THAT IS BEING STRONGLY OPPOSED, I REALLY FEEL THAT A HIGHWAY IN THE AREA WILL BE INEVITABLE AND MIGHT JUST AS WELL COME NOW WHEN WE IN WINDSORVILLE CAN HAVE SOME SAY IN EACTLY WHERE IT SHOULD GO AND HOW AS A TOWN TO MAKE USE OF THE CHANGES THAT IT WILL BRING.

I URGE YOU TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE PLANS AT THE SAME TIME THAT YOU REMAIN SENSITIVE TO THE DEEP FEELINGS AGAINST CHANGE WHICH LIE BEHIND THE OPPOSITION.

YOURS TRULY,

MRS RESPONDENT

Adult

13473

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD,

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OPPOSITION TO OUR MAYOR'S PROPOSAL FOR AN EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE AT WINDSORVILLE. PRESENT ACCESS TO THE EXPRESSWAY IS QUITE ADEQUATE AND I FEEL THAT SUCH AN EXTENSION OF HIGHWAY ACCESS WILL RESULT IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF DESTRUCTION OF NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HUMAN RECOURCES FOR THE SAKE OF COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION AND DEVELOPMENT. WINDSOR VALLEY AND WINDSORVILLE REPRESENT A VALUABLE PART OF OUR HISTORICAL HERITAGE WHICH OUGHT NOT BE DESTROYED. THEREFORE I ASK YOU NOT TO CHANGE YOUR ORIGINAL BUILDING PLAN.

SINCERELY ETC.

98930

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD:

AS OUR COMMUNITY PRIDES ITSELF IN THE HISTORIC & RURAL ATMOSPHERE IT HAS, I FEEL THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE WOULD BE INCOMPATIBLE. BRINGING IN ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC & ALL IT'S PROBLEMS PLUS THE MOTELS, GAS STATIONS & RESTAURANTS WILL DESTROY THE RURAL ATMOSPHERE.

THOSE OF US WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO LIVE HERE HAVE DONE SO BECAUSE WE PREFER THIS QUIET, "RURAL" LIFE. THOSE WHO PREFER MILES OF PAVEMENT REPLACING FIELDS & MEADOWS SHOULD LIVE ELSEWHERE.

LASTLY, THERE ARE SO FEW OPEN AREAS LEFT AND WE WANT TO KEEP WHAT WE DO HAVE. PEOPLE WHO WANT MAY COME TO WINDSORVILLE ON THE EXISTING ROADS.

SINCERELY,

RESPONDENT

Adult

50988

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD:

THIS LETTER COMES FROM ONE RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE WHO OPPOSES THE NEW INTERCHANGE YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT.

AS OUR WORLD GETS MORE COMPLEX AND AREAS WHICH ONCE CONTAINED GRASS AND TREES NOW ARE COVERED WITH CONCRETE AND LIGHT POLES, I FEEL THERE IS A GREAT NEED TO PRESERVE THE HISTORIC RURAL TRADITION FOUND IN AREAS SUCH AS WINDSOR VALLEY.

THEY MUST BE PROTECTED. THEY GIVE US AN IDEA OF OUR PAST AND ARE THE LAST REMAINING AREAS OF QUIET, BEAUTIFUL LAND.

WE WANT PEOPLE TO SEE THIS AREA, BUT I FEAR THAT THE HEAVY INFLUX OF TRAFFIC REPRESENTED BY THE INTERCHANGE WILL DESTROY THE QUALITIES OF WINDSOR VALLEY. IT WOULD BRING WITH IT: TRAFFIC JAMS, TOO MUCH COMMERCIALIZATION (SOUVENIRS, HOT DOG STANDS, ETC), A LOSS OF FEELING THAT THIS IS OUR COMMUNITY.

I WOULD PROPOSE THAT A STUDY BE MADE TO SEE IF ADEQUATE, WELL MARKED ROADS FROM THE CAPITAL BE USED AS WAYS OF GUIDING PEOPLE THROUGH THE VALLEY.

LASTLY, THERE SEEMS TO BE A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN OUR MAYOR AND ONE OF OUR COMMITTEEMEN. PERHAPS WE OF THE CITY SHOULD MAKE SURE WE HAVE A CONSENSUS OF ALL PARTIES INVOLVED BEFORE YOU TAKE FURTHER ACTION.

YOURS TRULY,

Adult

55249

DEAR SIR.

I AM COMPELLED TO SUPPORT COMMITTEEMAN SWIFT IN HIS OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE.

I FEEL THAT WINDSORVILLE IS A WARM, PLEASANT COMMUNITY AND SHOULD REMAIN SO. CAUSING THE INTERCHANGE TO RUN THROUGH THE TOWN WOULD, I AM AFRAID, CAUSE CONGESTION, DEPERSONALIZATION, AND, PERHAPS, EXPLOITATION BY OUTSIDE PERSONS.

IF AN INTERCHANGE IS, IN FACT, DESIREABLE, I WOULD PROPOSE ROUTING THE INTERCHANGE AROUND WINDSORVILLE RATHER THAN THROUGH IT. IN THIS WAY, THE TRAFFIC NEEDS WOULD BE MET, BUT THE INTEGRITY AND INDIVIDUALITY OF THE COMMUNITY WOULD NOT BE COMPROMISED OR JEPORDIZED.

74491

DEAR SIR;

THIS LETTER IS TO INFORM YOU OF MY STRONG PERSONAL OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE FROM THE EXPRESSWAY THRU WINDSOR VALLEY. WINDSOR VALLEY IS ONE OF THE FEW AREAS LEFT IN THE STATE STILL RICH IN NATURAL BEAUTY AND HISTORICAL VALUE, AND DEFINITELY DOES NOT REQUIRE FOUR LANES OF CONCRETE CUT THROUGH THE CENTER OF IT TO ADD TO EITHER THE BEAUTY OR THE HISTORICAL RICHNESS OF THE VALLEY. I AM SURE THAT THERE ARE ALTERNATE ROUTES AVAILABLE BY-PASSING WINDSOR VALLEY, AND YET PROVING TO BE JUST AS GOOD A ROUTE FROM MARKET BEACH TO THE STATE CAPITAL, POSSIBLY EVEN BETTER, CONSIDERING THE CONSIDERABLE ADDED COST OF CUTTING SUCH A LARGE ROADWAY THROUGH SUCH MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN SUCH AS YOU WOULD ENCOUNTER IN COMING THROUGH THE VALLEY.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

RESPECTFULLY YOURS,

Adult

61511

DEAR COMMISIONER STROUD:

AS A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY OPINION ON THE PROPOSED EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE. I FEEL THAT THE INTERCHANGE IS JUST THE CHANGE THIS TOWN NEEDS. WINDSORVILLE IS NOW A DYING TOWN. EACH GRADUATING CLASS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GO AWAY TO COLLEDGE AND NEVER COME BACK. WE ARE TOO CUT OFF FROM THE MAINSTREAM. SURE, I'M ALL FOR HISTORY; BUT LET US KEEP THE PAST IN THE MUSEUMS WHERE IT BELONGS. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THIS COUNTRY IN EVERY TOWN DID WHAT MR SWIFT WANTS OURS TO DO. THE TIMES ARE CHANGING AND IT'S ABOUT TIME WINDSOR-VILLE DID. IT WILL BE A LOT OF HARD WORK. NEW CITY PLANNING AND SUCH; BUT I THINK THE CITIZENS ARE READY FOR IT, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG ONES WHO LIKE THE TOWN BUT HAVE THE OCCUPATIONAL FIELDS TO CONSIDER.

THANK YOU FOR REGARDING MY LETTER.

CORDIALLY,

FUTURE-SIGHTER

Adult

21731

BOX 00
CITY, STATE

JULY 28, 1969

DEAR SIR;

I AM WRITING TO GIVE MY OPINION ON THE MATTER CONCERNING THE INTERCHANGE AND EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE CAPITAL. AS A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE I WOULD BE VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF HAVING AN INTERCHANGE LOCATED AT WINDSORVILLE. IT WOULD BRING MORE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES TO WINDSORVILLE. AS MORE PEOPLE AND TRAFFIC GO THROUGH MORE PEOPLE WOULD MOVE IN AND THUS BRING NEW BUSINESSES AND MORE BUSINESS FOR THE RESIDENTS.

I AM IN FAVOR AND HOPE THAT THE INTERCHANGE WILL GO THROUGH.

SINCERELY YOURS,

A RESIDENT,
MRS RESPONDENT

Adult

68181

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD.

AS A PROUD AND CONCERNED RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, I FEEL OBLIGATED TO WRITE YOU MY PERSONAL OPINION OF THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE TO BE LOCATED NEAR OUR COMMUNITY.

OUR COMMUNITY IS OLD AND PROUD, STEEPED IN THE TRADITION OF COLONIAL HISTORY. I SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT WITH A FEW PRECAUTIONS WE CAN REMAIN A QUIET, PICTURESQUE VALLEY WITH THE ADDED CONVENIENCE OF AN INTERCHANGE. OUR COLONIAL RURALISM ALREADY ATTRACTS A GOODLY NUMBER OF TOURISTS EACH YEAR. AN INTERCHANGE WOULD SIMPLY ADD CONVENIENCE TO THE TOURIST. I AM ALSO SURE THAT IT WOULD ADD TO THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS. THE COMMUNITY ALREADY DERIVES NUMEROUS BENEFITS FROM THE TOURIST TRADE--MORE TRADE, MORE BENEFITS.

SINCE INTERCHANGES ARE ALWAYS LOCATED A CONVENIENT DISTANCE FROM THE COMMUNITY PROPER, IT IS ONLY REASONABLE TO LOCATED THE MAIN TOURIST CONVENIENCES AT THE INTERCHANGE INSTEAD OF IN THE MIDST OF THE COMMUNITY OR FURTHER INTO THE VALLEY. DOING SO, WOULD MOSTLY ILIMINATE UNDUE DISTRUBANCES.

OUR ATTRACTIONS BEING OF A SIMPLER NATURE ATTRACTS THE MORE SUBDUED TOURIST. THEREFORE, THE NEED FOR GOUDY CHANGES IN OUR WAY OF LIFE WOULD BE UNNECESSARY. THE FILLING STATIONS, RESTAURANTS, SOUVENIR SHOPS, ETC WOULD ALL BE LOCATED AWAY FROM US TAKING THE NOISE, COMOTION AND LITTER OUT OF SIGHT.

WITH THE INCONVENIENCE OF TOURISM SETTLED A COMFORTABLE DISTANCE FROM THE COMMUNITY, OUR UTMOST CONCERN, THE CONVENIENCE OF TOURISM CAN BE CAPITALIZED ON. THE BUSINESS PRIDE OF THE COMMUNITY, BEING FORESIGHTED, SHOULD BE SURE TO TAKE ALL BUSINESS OPTIONS AROUND THE INTERCHANGE BEFORE UNCONCERNED OUTSIDERS COME IN. KEEPING THE MAJORITY OF THE UNCONCERNED OUT WOULD KEEP OUR COMMUNITY AS WE DESIRE IT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BRING IN AN INCREASED REVENUE AND A BETTER STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ALL OF US.

Adult

68181 - continued

PRECAUTION AND FORESIGHT CAN PRODUCE THE DESIRED COMBINATION OF PROGRESS AND A SENCE OF UNTOUCHED HISTORICAL BEAUTY. THE INTERCHANGE IS PROGRESS; IT IS UP TO US TO HANDLE IT PROPERLY. WE NEED PROGRESS! THANK YOU.

SINCERELY,

MRS RESPONDENT

94192

OLIVER P STROUD
HIGHWAY COMMISSIONER

DEAR MR STROUD:

I AM WRITING IN REFERENCE TO THE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING A PLAN IN CONSIDERATION FOR THE BUILDING OF AN ADDITIONAL INTERCHANGE ON THE EXPRESSWAY BETWEEN MARKET BEACH AND THE STATE CAPITAL. IT WAS STATED THAT THE NEW EXCHANGE WOULD PROVIDE ACCESS TO WINDSOR VALLEY, PASSING THROUGH WINDSORVILLE VIA STATE HIGHWAY 260. AS A LONG TIME RESIDENT AND CITIZEN OF WINDSORVILLE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, I FEEL IT MY DUTY TO STATE OPPOSITION TO SUCH A PROPOSAL. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT MR SWIFT'S REASONING ON THE SUBJECT, IS FAR MORE INTELLEGENT THAN MAYOR KRONBACHER'S.

WE ARE ALL AWARE THAT TIMES ARE CHANGING, AND I'M SURE THAT NO ONE WISHES TO REMAIN IN THE PAST IN WINDSORVILLE. THE TRUTH IS THAT OUR VILLAGE IS AS MODERN AS ANY OF ITS SIZE. THE MAYOR, IN CHOOSING THE FIGURE 200 YEARS, IS OBVIOUSLY ATTEMPTING TO EMPLOY A BIT OF POLITICAL JARGON, ATTEMPTING TO SWAY THE CITIZENS WITH GROSS GENERALIZATION. THE FACT REMAINS THAT OUR VALLEY'S MAIN INDUSTRY IS ITS TURIST TRADE. IT IS THE VERY COLONIAL ENVIRONMENT THAT DRAWS THE TOURISTS TO OUR AREA.

Adult

94192 - continued

IN SPEAKING OF "DEVELOPMENT" OF THE VALLEY THE MAYOR FAILS TO MENTION THE SUBSEQUENT DESTRUCTIVE ASPECTS THAT FOLLOW. THE POSSIBILITIES OF POLUTION OF ALL THE VARIOUS SORTS COULD BE EMINENT. I MUST CONCLUDE THAT MAINTENENCE OF OUR HISTORICAL COUNTRYSIDE IS FAR MORE USEFUL AND IMPORTANT, BOTH TO LOCAL RESIDENTS AND THE COUNTRY AT LARGE.

SINCERELY YOURS,

MR RESPONDENT

505

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD,

WITH DEAD FISH FROM OUR RIVERS STINKING ALONG THE BANKS OR LIVE FISH TOO POLLUTED WITH D D T TO EAT; WITH SMOKE OR THE SMELL OF SULPHUR DIOXIDE IN THE AIR OF CITIES MAKING EYES SMART AND LUNGS BURN, SOME KINDS OF POLLUTION NEED NOT BE INDICATED. THE POLLUTION FROM NOISE, HOWEVER, WHICH ONLY THE VERY RICH OR VERY RURAL ESCAPE OFTEN PASSES UNNOTICED. I WISH TO REMIND YOU THAT THE TRAFFIC NOISES FROM YOUR PROPOSED INTERCHANGE AND HIGHWAY WILL BRING THAT POLLUTION INTO WINDSORVILLE AND ROB US OF A PEACE WHICH CANNOT BE RECAPTURED OR PRICED IN TERMS OF "DEVELOPMENT" AND "REDUCED TAXATION."

I PLAN TO OBJECT TO YOUR SCHEME THROUGH EVERY LEGITIMATE MEANS: WRITING TO THE NEWS PAPER, SPEAKING AT TOWN MEETINGS AND WRITING MY POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES. IF I FIND THAT I RECEIVE NO REASONABLE RESPONSE FROM THE NEWS MEDIA AND AM ALLOWED NO HEARING IN THE POLITICAL FORUM, I WILL HAVE TO ATTEMPT MORE VIGOROUS FORMS OF PROTEST. THIS IS NOT A TREAT, BUT A STATEMENT OF THE MEANS I FEEL JUSTIFIED IN EMPLOYING.

Adult

505 - continued

A SINGLE CITIZEN OF A SMALL VILLAGE WHICH EVEN THE MAYOR CONSIDERS BACKWARD AND PART OF THE "COLONIAL PAST" MAY YET BE ABLE TO REGISTER ON OBJECTION WHICH PENTENTRATES THE AUCOSTICAL TILE OF YOUR ALL TOO MODERN OFFICE. THE REASON FOR MY BELIEVING SUCH ON IMPROBABLE CIRCUMSTANCE IS THAT I KNOW I AM FIGHTING FOR SOMETHING VALUABLE WHILE YOU HAVE, IN CHANGING YOUR ORIGIN PLANS, BENT ONLY TO CONVENIENCE AND EXPEDIENCY.

42345

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD:

IT IS MOST ENCOURAGING TO FIND THAT HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT IS STUDYING AN INTERCHANGE ON THE FREEWAY TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO WINDSORVILLE. MANY OF US WHO LIVE HERE ARE MOST PLEASED WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT. WE HOPE THE STUDY GIVES FRUITION TO THE INTERCHANGE.

THERE ARE GOOD REASONS TO PUT WINDSORVILLE "ON THE MAP." IT WILL BE BENEFICIAL TO WINDSORVILLE AND TO THE STATE.

FIRST, CONSIDER THE BENIFITS TO WINDSORVILLE. OUR PEOPLE WILL HAVE READY ACCESS BY THE FREEWAY TO MANY OTHER PARTS OF THE STATE. WE WILL BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP A SOUND TOURIST BUSINESS. FURTHER, READY ACCESS TO WINDSORVILLE WILL ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA INDUSTRALLY. AND THE FREEWAY WILL AID THE PRESENT BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN ITS TRANSPORTATION NEEDS TO THE "OUTSIDE WORLD."

SECOND, CONSIDER THE BENIFITS TO THE STATE. READY ACCESS TO WINDSORVILLE WILL OPEN A WHOLE NEW WORLD TO MANY FOLK WHO WILL NOT PRESENTLY SEEK OUT HISTORIC WINDSOR-VILLE. WHILE WE HERE LIVE IN THIS COLONIAL BEAUTY, WE SOMETIMES FORGET THAT MANY FOLK HAVE FOR MANY REASONS NEVER KNOWN THE PAST AS A REALITY WHICH CAN BE SEEN AND TOUCHED. WE WISH TO SHARE THE PAST OF OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE PRESENT.

AGAIN, I SAY THAT I HOPE YOUR STUDY LEADS YOU TO OPEN WINDSORVILLE TO THE FREEWAY AND THUS TO PRESENT. THANK YOU FOR HEARING MY CASE.

Adult

60983

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD:

AS A LONG TIME RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE I WISH TO STATE THAT I AM DEFINITELY IN FAVOR OF THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE WHICH IS PRESENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION. I SEE ADVANTAGES FOR THE CITY OF WINDSORVILLE; NOT SO MUCH FROM THE PEOPLE, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, INCREASED REVENUES AND LOWER TAXES THAT WOULD RESULT, BUT ALSO THAT ON A RECIPRICAL BASIS IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR THE PEOPLE OF WINDSORVILLE AND ADJACENT TOWNS TO HAVE FASTER ACCESS TO THE STATE CAPITAL. I KNOW THERE ARE MANY CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT OUR CHILDREN MUST MISS SIMPLY BECAUSE OF OUR LACK OF FACILITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO US. SOME OF OUR CHILDREN NEVER GET TO SEE A MUSEUM OR ART GALLERY UNTIL THEY ARE GROWN. I WANT MY CHILDREN TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH NEW AND DIFFERENT CULTURAL EXPERIENCES. (THEIR SPHERE OF ENTERTAINMENT IS LIMITED, I FEAR, TO A PLACE TO ROLLER SKATE, AND ONE MOVIE THEATRE).

CERTAINLY A GOOD AMOUNT OF COOPERATION AND COORDINATED EFFORT IS NECESSARY SO THAT WE BOTH CAN REALIZE THE BENEFITS OF THIS PROPOSED INTERCHANGE. I AGREE WITH MAYOR KRONBACHER THAT WINDSORVILLE IS FAR BEHIND THE TIMES AND THIS COULD BE THE BOOST THAT WE NEED TO GET HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. WITH CARE AND PLANNING THE WARMTH AND FRIENDLINESS OF THE PEOPLE OF WINDSORVILLE CAN BE MAINTAINED THROUGH ALL OF THE TURMOIL CREATED BY THIS NEW INTERCHANGE.

AGAIN, LET ME REITERATE MY FULL SUPPORT FOR THIS PROPOSED INTERCHANGE. THE PEOPLE OF WINDSORVILLE NEED THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH UP WITH THE REALITIES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

Adult

75859

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD,

I AM A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE & WISH TO EXPRESS MY OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE THAT WILL EFFECT MY TOWN. I CONCUR WITH THE OPINIONS OF COMMITEMAN MILTON SWIFT IN OPPOSING THIS INTRUSION INTO THE ENVIRONMENT OF THIS AREA. MOST OF US WHO LIVE HERE PREFER THE RURAL ATMOSPHERE; IF NOT, WE WOULD HAVE SELECTED A MORE SUBURBAN COMMUNITY IN WHICH TO LIVE. PROGRESS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN TECHNICAL & MATERIAL ADVANCES; I CONSIDER IT MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE INDIVIDUAL RELATE AND SURVIVE PEACEFULLY AND CONTENTEDLY IN HIS ENVIRONMENT.

I STRONGLY FEEL THAT THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE WOULD DESTROY THE ENVIRONMENT THAT I, AND MANY OTHERS HAVE CHOSEN TO LIVE AND RAISE OUR CHILDREN. WE CHOOSE TO LIVE WITHOUT THE "MODERN CONVENIENCES" OF METROPOLITAN AND SURBURBAN COMMUNITIES THAT EXPERIENCE UNREST & DISCONTENT CAUSED FROM CONGESTED POPULACES, TRAFFIC, ETC.

I URGE YOU TO CONSIDER THE WISHES OF THOSE WHO RESIDE IN WINDSORVILLE, AS OPPOSED TO THOSE OF MAYOR KRONBACHER, WHO FEELS THAT PROGRESS IS DEPENDENT ON KEEPING UP WITH TECHNICAL CHANGES.

VERY SINCERELY YOURS

Adult

59611

000 BLANK STREET
CITY, STATE 00000

JULY 13, 1969

COMMISSIONER OLIVER F STROUD
STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
000 BLANK STREET
CITY, STATE 00000

DEAR COMMISSIONER STROUD:

RE: WINDSORVILLE INTERCHANGE FROM STATE HIGHWAY 260.

AS A RESIDENT OF WINDSORVILLE, I FEEL THAT I HAVE THE RIGHT TO ADDRESS YOU ON THIS INTERCHANGE CONTROVERSY. OUR MAYOR HAS SAID THAT WE NEED TO DEVELOP OUR VALLEY AND VILLAGE. I AGREE. THE PROPOSED INTERCHANGE WOULD ENABLE US TO INTICE BUSINESS INTO THE AREA. NEW PEOPLE WOULD COME IN, MORE JOBS FOR RESIDENTS AND NEW ARRIVALS WOULD RESULT--THE ENTIRE AREA WOULD GROW AND PROSPER.

SOME OPPONENTS HAVE SAID THAT THE HISTORICAL TRADITIONS WOULD BE LOST. I SAY--NOT SO. RATHER, MORE PEOPLE WOULD BE AWARE OF OUR LOCAL HISTORY AND COULD VISIT OUR AREA TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR COUNTRY. WHAT IS THE USE OF HAVING SOMETHING HISTORICAL IF NO ONE CAN SEE IT?

SINCERELY YOURS,

MR RESPONDENT